

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 1 of 66

- [1- Pool is getting ready](#)
- [2- BBB says EIP debit cards are legitimate stimulus payments under CARES Act](#)
- [3- South Dakota seeking to join online SNAP pilot](#)
- [4- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [8- Rehms Bridal Shower](#)
- [8- Orthopedic Physical Therapy](#)
- [9- Area COVID-19 Cases](#)
- [10- May 27th COVID-19 UPDATE](#)
- [13- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [17- Daily Devotional](#)
- [18- 2020 Groton Events](#)
- [19- News from the Associated Press](#)



Chicken Soup
for the Soul

“THE BIGGEST REWARDS IN LIFE ARE FOUND OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE. LIVE WITH IT. FEAR AND RISK ARE PREREQUISITES IF YOU WANT TO ENJOY A LIFE OF SUCCESS AND ADVENTURE.”

-JACK CANFIELD



Tricia Keith and Kami Lipp signed up several pool memberships on the first day, including Mel Sombke pictured above. The opening date of the pool has not been determined yet. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jasmine Schinkel makes an X on the sidewalk as Tricia Keith marks out 6' for proper social distancing at the pool. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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BBB says EIP debit cards are legitimate stimulus payments under CARES Act

(5-27-20) Since last week, consumers who have not received their federal stimulus check have been asking the Better Business Bureau (BBB) about the prepaid debit card they received in the mail from MetaBank. Some people thought it may be a scam.

BBB is assuring consumers that this is a legitimate debit card. MetaBank is the US Treasury's financial agent, and it is their Economic Impact Payment (EIP) to you. The card was sent instead of a Stimulus check to nearly four million Americans who don't have the necessary bank account information on file with the IRS. BBB President Jim Hegarty stated, "The cards are delivered in a plain envelope from 'Money Network Cardholder Services'— and nothing on the envelope identifies it as an Economic Impact Payment from the government. It may appear to be junk mail, but please be careful not to throw it away."

The card itself is a VISA with the blue background and white stars of the American flag, and will be preloaded with the money that the person is eligible for. Each mailing includes instructions on how to activate and use the card. You will, however, need to verify personal information to activate the card and to find out how much money is on it. "But the government will not call, text or email you asking for that information. If you do receive such a communication, that is probably a scam and it should be reported to the BBB at bbb.org/scamtracker/," said Hegarty

How to activate your EIP Card:

Call 1.800.240.8100 or go to eipcard.com to register and activate your card. During activation, you will be asked to validate your identity by providing, at minimum, your name, address, and social security number. You will also be asked to create a 4-digit PIN required for ATM transactions and automated assistance. You can also find out the amount of money that is on the card. For your Account security, do not use personal information as your PIN. For Cards with more than one name, only the primary Cardholder (listed first on the Card) may activate the Card.

For questions you may have and specific step by step instructions, go to eipcard.com/faq. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau also put out a video explaining the process at [youtube.com/watch?v=8_b7wBr8d7I&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_b7wBr8d7I&feature=youtu.be).

South Dakota seeking to join online SNAP pilot

PIERRE – South Dakotans enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) may have the option of buying groceries online in the future, the Department of Social Services announced today.

South Dakota will submit a request to join the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Online Pilot Program, which would allow SNAP recipients to use their Electronic Benefit Transaction card (EBT) to make online purchases at authorized SNAP retailers. The request, being made in response to challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, is anticipated to be submitted within the month.

“Access to food is fundamental to the overall health of South Dakota families and that is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Department of Social Services (DSS) Cabinet Secretary Laurie Gill. “DSS is always looking for effective options to better serve the people of South Dakota. This program will allow South Dakotans in remote areas who may struggle with access to fresh foods another alternative.”

DSS will work with its EBT vendor to complete the necessary technical changes needed for the pilot program and seek partnership with approved retailers.

“We are excited about the opportunity this brings for the people of South Dakota,” Gill said. “In the coming months, we will be working with our partners at the federal level and retailers in South Dakota to launch this program change.”

SNAP benefits will still be able to be used at existing retailers and the online program will allow additional options for food purchases.

“The SNAP program is a crucial safety net for thousands of South Dakotans who struggle to afford food for their families,” Gill said. “We are proud of the assistance we provide to individuals and families in every corner of the state every single day.”

For more information on the Online Pilot Program, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/online-purchasing-pilot>.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 4 of 66

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

The numbers are sort of a mixed bag today, but none of the changes are large, so overall, I'd say we're holding.

We're at 1,707,300 cases in the US. New case numbers were steady today, still under 20,000. NY leads with 369,801 cases holding steady. NJ has 156,628 cases, a decline in new cases for a second consecutive day and holding below 1000. Remaining top-10 states are as follows: IL – 114,612, CA – 101,776, MA – 94,220, PA – 73,646, TX – 59,026, MI – 55,544, FL – 52,626, and MD – 49,042. These ten states account for 66% of US cases. 3 more states have over 40,000 cases, 3 more states have over 30,000 cases, 5 more states have over 20,000 cases, 9 more have over 10,000, 8 more + DC over 5000, 7 more + PR and GU over 1000, 5 more over 100, and VI + MP under 100.

Here's the latest on movement in new case reports. Those with substantial numbers of cases which are not showing much change include IL, MN, MD, IA, GA, AZ, OH, and MO. States where new case reports are increasing include CA, NC, FL, TN, VA, WI, LA, and AL. States where new case reports are decreasing include NY, TX, NJ, MI, MA, CT, PA, and IN. We'll watch the states showing increases and hope those with decreases continue the decline.

We hit a tragic milestone today: 100,000 deaths, 100,418, to be precise. Today the number of new deaths increased slightly, going back over 1000. NY has 29,339, NJ has 11,339, MA has 6547, MI has 5334, PA has 5290, IL has 5118, CA has 3959, and CT has 3803. 4 of these states are reporting fewer than 100 new deaths today; the other 4 are below 200. There are 5 more states over 2000 deaths, 5 more states over 1000 deaths, 8 more over 500, 14 more + DC and PR over 100, and 10 + GU, VI, and MP under 100.

I've fielded a question about how long it takes for someone who develops symptoms to pass Covid-19 to another person, and I'm thinking there may be more folks out there wondering the same thing. Recognizing that our understanding of these things is still developing, here's what I have on that.

Incubation for this virus (time from infection to the development of symptoms) runs 3-14 days with a mean of 5-6 days. You can transmit it from 48-72 hours before symptoms develop with a mean of 2.3 days and a peak infectiousness at 0.7 days before symptoms. Infectiousness declines over the next 7 days, and while you can theoretically transmit it for another week or so, we don't think this is a big factor in spread.

That means we're looking at a cycle time most often around a mean time of 5.8 days. So if you get it, the time between when you are first infectious and when a person you infect at that time becomes infectious is 6 days or so.

On the subject of transmission, here's a round-up of the current state of knowledge on that: We believe that direct person-to-person transmission is an important, maybe the primary means of spread, probably through close-range contact, mainly via respiratory droplets. Virus released in the respiratory secretions when a person with infection coughs, sneezes, or talks can infect another person if it makes direct contact with mucous membranes or when a person touches an infected surface and then touches his own eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets typically do not travel more than about six feet before falling out of the air because they are heavy, although an especially forceful sneeze could project them farther. In general, mask-wearing, maintaining proper distancing, and staying home when you're sick will all interfere significantly with transmission by this direct route.

We're becoming pretty darned sure this can be spread through the airborne route; that would be from particles smaller than droplets, mainly aerosols (tiny droplets) and droplet nuclei, the dehydrated remains of a moist droplet. Those, being lighter, remain in the air over time and distance. Some studies have indicated the virus remains infectious in aerosols for three hours, but this is not proven. There have been some superspreader events (more on this later) where airborne transmission is the only reasonable explanation for the spread patterns seen. There's no way it is logical to ignore this possibility in planning to interrupt transmission. Actions that reduce airborne transmission are mask-wearing, proper distancing—six feet at all times and more whenever possible, ventilation with fresh air rather than recirculated air or high-efficiency filtration of recirculated air. Simply opening windows is an enormous help.

And then there is indirect contact via what are called fomites, objects which are contaminated with virus

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 5 of 66

particles. We're not sure how great the role these play, but they're relatively easy and inexpensive to deal with by using good hand hygiene—frequent handwashing and using hand sanitizer when washing is not possible and disinfection of frequently-touched items.

The virus has been detected in non-respiratory specimens including stool, blood, tears, and semen, but there haven't been any reported cases of transmission via these routes. It seems likely that, if these were important routes of spread, we'd have heard of it by now.

This brings us to the subject of the superspreading event, that is an occurrence where one person spreads an infection to far more than the R_e would predict. It helps to recognize that R_e is an average—the average number of people to whom one infected individual transmits an infection. There have been superspreader events in this Covid-19 pandemic where one individual has been responsible for dozens of new cases. Outside of hospitals, almost all of the superspreading events have taken place in the context of (a) parties, (b) face-to-face professional networking events and meetings, (c) religious gatherings, (d) sports events, (e) meat-processing facilities, (f) ships at sea, (g) singing groups, and (h) funerals.

A London School of Hygiene analysis suggested that 80% of the secondary transmissions were caused by just 10% of infected people. So it seems reasonable to include in your plans to avoid becoming infected to avoid a superspreading event. Here's a helpful guide to those kinds of events:

Bars and clubs: A South Korean man who didn't know he was infected went out on the town on April 30, hitting five bars and clubs. There have been 187 cases attributed to his night out, including 93 who were at the same clubs. South Korea's doing excellent work in contact tracing, so we have a pretty clear picture of the fallout. 5517 people were in those five clubs while he was in them; all but 700 have been contacted. 35,000 people have been tested in relation to this cluster.

Buffets: Tests that have been done on buffet restaurants indicate they are a huge issue for transmission. In these experiments using fluorescent ink to illustrate spread, one person is able to "infect" pretty much everyone in the place; hands, faces, plates, napkins were all affected. Self-serve is a problem.

Buses: In January, an asymptomatic woman who'd been to Wuhan took a bus with 66 other passengers to a Buddhist worship event, less than an hour each way. 24 of the 66 passengers were infected. Many people sitting farther than six feet from her were infected; in a small, enclosed environment, distance is not protective. Bus drivers are particularly at risk of death; they should be provided protective gear. This is a problem especially if the air on the bus recirculates rather than bringing in fresh air from outside.

Choirs: We've talked in the past about that infamous March choir practice in Washington where one woman experiencing respiratory symptoms (before much was understood about this disease) managed to infect 53 of 61 of her fellow choir members over a period somewhat less than two hours; two died. In another choir in Amsterdam which held a concert on March 8, 102 out of 130 singers tested positive. It is clear that singing raises the risk of transmission, which is why church choirs have been advised not to sing at services for at least a year, maybe longer.

Church: While we're on the subject, attending church is a problem too. We've also had this conversation before. Between March 6 and 11, a church in Arkansas held a children's event with services over a three-day period. There were two couples in attendance who felt ill at the time, and 35 of 92 members tested positive and three died. One infected church member in South Korea accounted for 5080 cases. Singing and group events involving eating increase the risk.

Family gatherings: In February, a man attended a funeral in Chicago after attending a potluck meal with the family while experiencing minor symptoms. He then went to a birthday party a few days later. 11 people with whom he came in contact tested positive, and two died. Some of these people transmitted the virus to others resulting in 16 cases and three deaths overall.

Gyms: There was a cluster of cases around Zumba classes in South Korea. Eight of 27 instructors at a workshop tested positive, but not before they went home to their communities, teaching classes. Within a month, there were 112 cases stemming from that workshop, 57 of students and the rest secondary infections from those students. The infection rate among students in those classes was 26%. One infected instructor also taught Pilates classes, and none of those participants got sick, so it appears the higher-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 6 of 66

intensity classes with heavy breathing create higher risk. Gyms are a problem, especially if ventilation is insufficient.

Malls: There was a 34-case cluster in Wenzhou, China. In Tianjin, China, 21 people were infected in a mall department store over the course of five days. The high traffic numbers can lead to large numbers of infections, although the risk to any individual customer is likely to be low.

Offices: There was an outbreak around an office in South Korea in March. 1145 people were eventually tested with 97 testing positive, nearly all of them working on the same floor. 89 of the 97 worked on the same side of the same floor in a call center, so proximity matters, as does time. When you spend all day together with others, the risk is high, especially if everyone is talking a lot, as would be true in a call center.

Sports venues and stadiums: A soccer game in Italy in February made the town the epicenter of an enormous outbreak; 35% of one of the teams and more than one-third of the other became infected. A sectional basketball tournament in Indiana resulted in at least a dozen cases and five deaths.

Venues that do not appear to create superspreader events include grocery shopping (constant movement in relatively spacious buildings), airplane rides (as long as everyone wears masks and particularly for shorter trips), and voting (no spike in cases after Wisconsin primaries). I would say a word of caution about voting: Working at the polls may still pose a considerable risk because poll workers stay in station for hours on election day. Likewise, if indoor lines are long, that could increase the level of risk, even if distancing is observed; outdoor lines would be somewhat less risky unless distancing is not done. Still in question are schools. A study done in New South Wales, Australia, looking at 15 schools, found that in 10 high schools and five primary schools with 18 cases, nine students and nine staff, there were just two secondary cases. However, the schools were not operating as normal: Many children stayed home, which makes numbers smaller and distancing easier; large assemblies were avoided, and more outdoor activities were held. Because so many schools have been closed since early on, it is difficult to say whether the virus can spread efficiently in classrooms. That remains to be seen; could be we find out the hard way.

We also need to recognize that some groups are more vulnerable than others to transmission and the effects of the virus. One in three deaths from Covid-19 in the US are workers or residents of nursing homes. Nine of the top 10 clusters in the US are in meatpacking plants and prisons. The death rate is 10 times higher in areas with low incomes. Communities of color have almost five times as much chance of infection. Now even if you don't care about the well-being of elderly, meatpackers, prisoners, poor folks, or people of color (which makes you a bad person), these outbreaks do not happen in a vacuum; they happen in a society that includes you. We cannot control this pandemic if we do not address infection rates in these at-risk populations, and as long as it is not under control, none of us goes back to our regular lives. If we don't want to do it for others, we'd be smart to do it for ourselves.

There is what appears to be major news on the testing front. We have talked about the difficulties with antibody tests, that is, tests to see whether a person has developed antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, which would be indicative of prior infection and, presumably, protection against the virus. You may recall from a conversation we had here several days ago that there have been concerns about the specificity of these tests, that is, problems with false positives—the test saying you have antibodies when you actually don't. A lot of that seems to be tied up in the fact that many or most of us have been infected with the cold-causing kinds of coronaviruses and some cross-reaction between these tests we're running and those other coronavirus antibodies. We talked about the fact that a test with 95% specificity, while that sounds good, is going to get it wrong a whole lot of the time.

An additional wrinkle is that, even if we can demonstrate conclusively that you have made antibodies in response to this virus, not one of its cousins, we still don't know for sure what that means. Are you now immune, or aren't out? What we really need to know is whether your antibodies are what we call neutralizing antibodies, ones that render the virus unable to infect your cells, that is, neutralized.

There is a way to test for that, but it's hazardous, expensive, and time-consuming. It's called a virus neutralization test (VNT). To do this test, you need tissue cultures and live virus, which means you also need a fancy set-up to prevent any of that live virus making its way into the air and on to the mucous membranes of the lab workers because, well, you know, this is a potentially fatal infection and all. The

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 7 of 66

fancy lab set-up you need for this is classified as a biosafety level 3 (BSL3) laboratory, and you're not going to find one of those at your local clinic. The tests you're reading about, even the "good" ones, are tests for binding antibody, which doesn't correlate directly with neutralizing ability.

A further complication is that antibodies to a pathogen come in different chemical configurations, or isotypes, and most tests detect only one isotype, generally ones called IgM or IgG, with some for IgA. In a person with, for example, low levels of IgM and low levels of IgG, a test for IgM will detect only a low level of antibody, and this might not relate directly to how much actual neutralizing antibody is present. Who knew science was so hard, right?

I read a paper from a research group at Duke-NUS (National University of Singapore) Medical School reporting a new surrogate virus neutralization test (sVNT) which detects neutralizing antibodies without the need for live virus or tissue cultures; it can be completed in 1-2 hours in a BSL2 lab, which is the kind of biosafety level lab that's pretty common. In basic terms, what they've done is mimic the virus-host interaction in the lab using purified protein from the viral spike (the part of the virus that attaches to your cells) and ACE2 (remember this is the binding site) from host cells; this test looks for antibodies to inhibit that interaction, thus neutralizing the viral proteins. The viral proteins are bound to a color-changing molecule; when neutralizing antibodies are present and block binding, there will be no color change. The test's procedure for this uses the same principle as conventional VNT testing. They demonstrated that this interaction can be neutralized by serum of recovered patients in a dose-dependent manner, but not by serum of healthy persons who've never had Covid-19. They demonstrated the test detects neutralizing antibodies of any isotype and from any species (which will be useful in animal studies). They demonstrated the test's ability to distinguish between antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 and antibodies against other coronaviruses, including its close relative SARS-CoV; even allowing for the cross-reactivity we know exists between these two viruses, there was a significant difference in neutralization that could be detected by this test.

For the record, they did make some important side observations while doing the cross reactivity testing with SARS, and these are that (1) this sVNT appears to be more sensitive than VNT and (2) SARS neutralizing antibodies are detectable as long as 17 years after recovery, which has implications for the duration of immunity to the closely-related Covid-19.

Of course, as is always the case with lab testing, the devil is in the details. New tests must be validated, that is checked out against proven tests using known specimens to see whether they give the same results as the proven test. As nearly as I can tell (not being an expert in clinical lab methods), this one was subjected to rigorous validation procedures. Sensitivity, using 77 VNT-positive and 75 VNT-negative specimens, depending on the precise cut-off point used, ran 96-100%; and specificity, using 50 VNT-positive and 50 VNT-negative specimens, was 100%.

It remains to resolve the question of how neutralizing antibodies correlate with actual protection from infection, past experience with viral infections in general would seem to indicate that in most recovered patients, neutralizing antibody level is a good indicator of protective immunity.

So we appear to have a test that is as specific as and more sensitive than VNT whose results correlate well with VNT. The sVNT has the advantage that it can be run in most clinical labs without using live virus and can be adapted to fully automated testing, which would make large numbers of tests available. They have formed public and private partnerships to begin working toward making the tests commercially available. If these findings hold up, we may just have an important new tool for managing this disease. According to Linfa Wang, who directs the emerging infectious diseases program at the Medical School, "Our test can be used for contact-tracing, reservoir or intermediate animal tracking, assessment of herd immunity, longevity of protective immunity, and efficacy of different vaccine candidates."

I'm going to follow that good news with a different kind of good news about a new sort of joyride. It all started when a Belgian man, Tristan Van den Bosch, was driving to work one morning when he saw a man shouting at his mother. The reason he was shouting was that his mother was living on the third floor of a locked-down nursing home, and the only contact he could have with her was by standing on the ground and hollering up to her at her window. Van den Bosch says he thought, "We can help this man." His company, which cleans building facades, hasn't had much business these days, and so Van den Bosch

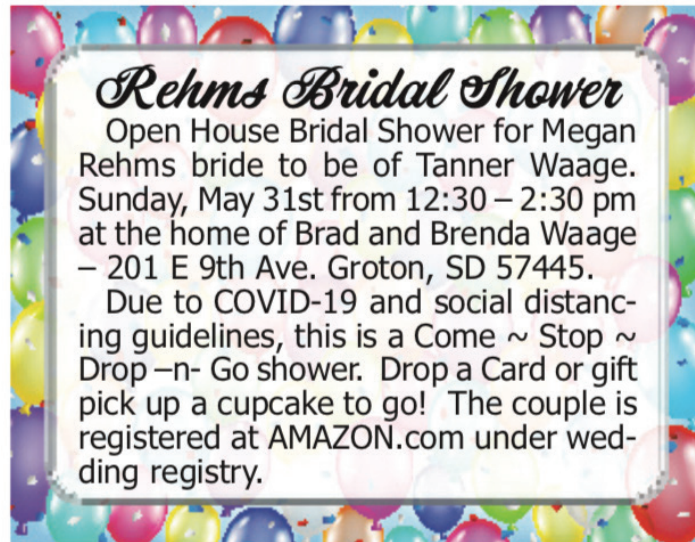
Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 8 of 66

has been driving his cranes, normally employed to lift cleaning crews, to homes in several towns, loading families up on platforms, and lifting them to their relatives' windows where they can see one another, wave, and connect. "Yes, OK, it costs money, the operators cost money but the machines are all used," Van den Bosch said. And in the end, "we're happy that we've been able to help people."

More getting together while staying apart. Kindness of strangers. Sacrifice for others. Let's all search inside ourselves for some of that, OK? You don't need a crane to do a good deed.

Keep safe, stay well, and we'll talk again.



Rehms Bridal Shower
Open House Bridal Shower for Megan Rehms bride to be of Tanner Waage. Sunday, May 31st from 12:30 – 2:30 pm at the home of Brad and Brenda Waage – 201 E 9th Ave. Groton, SD 57445.
Due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, this is a Come ~ Stop ~ Drop –n- Go shower. Drop a Card or gift pick up a cupcake to go! The couple is registered at AMAZON.com under wedding registry.

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 9 of 66

Area COVID-19 Cases

	May 20	May 21	May 22	May 23	May 24	May 25	May 26
Minnesota	17,029	17,670	18,200	19,005	19,845	20,573	21,315
Nebraska	10,846	11,122	11,425	11,662	11,989	12,134	12,355
Montana	471	478	479	479	479	479	479
Colorado	22,482	22,797	23,191	23,487	23,964	24,174	24,269
Wyoming	583	596	608	608	615	638	644
North Dakota	1,994	2095	2229	2317	2365	2418	2457
South Dakota	4,085	4177	4250	4356	4468	4563	4586
United States	1,528,661	1,551,853	1,577,758	1,602,148	1,622,670	1,643,499	1,662,768
US Deaths	91,938	93,439	94,729	96,013	97,087	97,722	98,223
Minnesota	+657	+641	+530	+805	+840	+728	+742
Nebraska	+221	+276	+303	+237	+327	+145	+221
Montana	+1	+7	+1	0	0	0	0
Colorado	+280	+315	+394	+296	+477	+210	+95
Wyoming	+6	+13	+12	0	+7	+23	+6
North Dakota	+63	+101	+134	+88	+48	+53	+39
South Dakota	+58	+92	+73	+106	+112	+95	+23
United States	+20,493	+23,192	+25,905	+24,390	+20,522	+20,829	+19,269
US Deaths	+600	+1,501	+1,290	+1,284	+1,074	+635	+501
	May 27	May 28					
Minnesota	21,960	22,464					
Nebraska	12,619	12,976					
Montana	479	481					
Colorado	24,565	24,767					
Wyoming	648	653					
North Dakota	2422	2439					
South Dakota	4653	4710					
United States	1,681,418	1,699,933					
US Deaths	98,929	100,442					
Minnesota	+652	+504					
Nebraska	+264	+357					
Montana	0	+2					
Colorado	+296	+202					
Wyoming	+4	+5					
North Dakota	-----	+17					
South Dakota	+67	+57					
United States	+18,650	+18,515					
US Deaths	+706	+1,513					

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 10 of 66

May 27th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Four more deaths were recorded in South Dakota with Brown and Todd counties recording their first deaths and Minnehaha County adding two. Brown County added two more positive cases and eight more recovered while Day County added one more positive case.

Brown County:

Active Cases: -7 (75)
Recovered: +8 (185)
Total Positive: +2 (261)
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (11)
Deaths: 1
Negative Tests: +15 (1377)
Percent Recovered: 71% (+3 percentage points)

South Dakota:

Positive: +57 (4710 total) (10 less than yesterday)
Negative: +1688 (32,385 total)
Hospitalized: +13 (391 total) - 101 currently hospitalized (5 less than yesterday)
Deaths: +4 (2 Minnehaha, 1 Brown, 1 Todd) (54 total)
Death by Ages: 1 age 30-39, 1 50-50, 2 60-69.
Recovered: +91 (3619 total)
Active Cases: 1037 (38 less than yesterday)
Percent Recovered: 77% (+1 percentage point)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett +1 (22), Brule +15 (138), Butte +4 (168), Campbell 23, Custer +2 (140), Dewey +9 (322), Edmunds +2 (61), Gregory +3 (66), Haakon 33, Hanson 56, Harding 29, Jones +1 (9), Kingsbury +1 (130), Mellette +2 (59), Perkins 21, Potter 60, unassigned +90 (1146).

Aurora: +1 recovered (3 of 22 recovered)
Beadle: +13 positive, +7 recovered (39 of 163 recovered)
Brown: +2 positive, +8 recovered (185 of 261 recovered)
Charles Mix: +1 positive, +3 recovered (8 of 14 recovered)
Clay: +1 recovered (13 of 15 recovered)
Codington: +1 positive (18 of 34 recovered)
Davison: +1 positive (9 of 11 recovered)
Day: +1 positive (10 of 13 recovered)
Grant: +1 recovered (6 of 11 recovered)
Jerauld: +1 positive (11 of 29 recovered)
Lincoln: +3 positive, +3 recovered (194 of 236 recovered)
Lyman: +1 positive, +1 recovered (5 of 13 recovered)
Minnehaha: +11 positive, +55 recovered (2813 of 3300 recovered)
Oglala Lakota: +3 positive (3 of 20 recovered)
Pennington: +10 positive, +5 recovered (35 of 172 recovered)
Roberts: +4 positive (17 of 39 recovered)
Stanley: +1 positive (8 of 10 recovered)
Todd: +2 positive (14 of 22 recovered)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 11 of 66

Tripp +3 recovered (6 of 6 recovered)
Turner: +1 positive (19 of 24 recovered)
Union: +1 positive, +1 recovered (57 of 87 recovered)
Yankton: +2 recovered (36 of 51)

Fully recovered from positive cases (added Tripp): Clark 4-4, Deuel 1-1, Faulk 1-1, Hand 1-1, Hyde 1-1, Lawrence 9-9, McPherson 1-1, Miner 1-1, Spink 4-4, Sully 1-1, Tripp 6-6, Walworth 5-5, Ziebach 1-1.

The N.D. DoH & private labs report 1,048 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 17 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 2,439.
State & private labs have reported 86,527 total completed tests.
1,762 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
▲ 25		
Asian, Non-Hispanic	555	12%
Black, Non-Hispanic	895	19%
Hispanic	819	17%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	440	9%
Other	567	12%
White, Non-Hispanic	1434	30%

County of Residence	# of Deaths
▲	
Beadle	2
Brown	1
Jerauld	1
McCook	1
Minnehaha	45
Pennington	3
Todd	1

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 12 of 66

County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
▲			
Aurora	22	3	102
Beadle	163	39	348
Bennett	0	0	22
Bon Homme	8	4	201
Brookings	15	14	618
Brown	261	185	1377
Brule	0	0	138
Buffalo	9	1	154
Butte	0	0	172
Campbell	0	0	23
Charles Mix	14	8	188
Clark	4	4	109
Clay	15	13	316
Codington	34	18	994
Corson	4	3	50
Custer	0	0	140
Davison	11	9	508
Day	13	10	134
Deuel	1	1	116
Dewey	0	0	322
Douglas	3	1	68
Edmunds	0	0	61
Fall River	4	3	154
Faulk	1	1	45
Grant	11	6	126
Gregory	0	0	66
Haakon	0	0	33
Hamlin	4	3	134
Hand	1	1	43
Hanson	0	0	56
Harding	0	0	29
Hughes	19	14	590
Hutchinson	4	3	173

Hyde	1	1	32
Jackson	2	0	29
Jerauld	30	11	68
Jones	0	0	9
Kingsbury	0	0	130
Lake	6	5	245
Lawrence	9	9	485
Lincoln	236	194	2499
Lyman	13	5	179
Marshall	4	1	93
McCook	5	4	191
McPherson	1	1	37
Meade	10	4	597
Mellette	0	0	59
Miner	1	1	69
Minnehaha	3300	2813	13018
Moody	18	15	204
Oglala Lakota	20	3	130
Pennington	172	35	2826
Perkins	0	0	21
Potter	0	0	60
Roberts	39	17	423
Sanborn	11	5	57
Spink	4	4	180
Stanley	10	8	87
Sully	1	1	24
Todd	22	14	402
Tripp	6	6	130
Turner	24	19	272
Union	87	57	517
Walworth	5	5	115
Yankton	51	36	1303
Ziebach	1	1	49
Unassigned****	0	0	1146

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

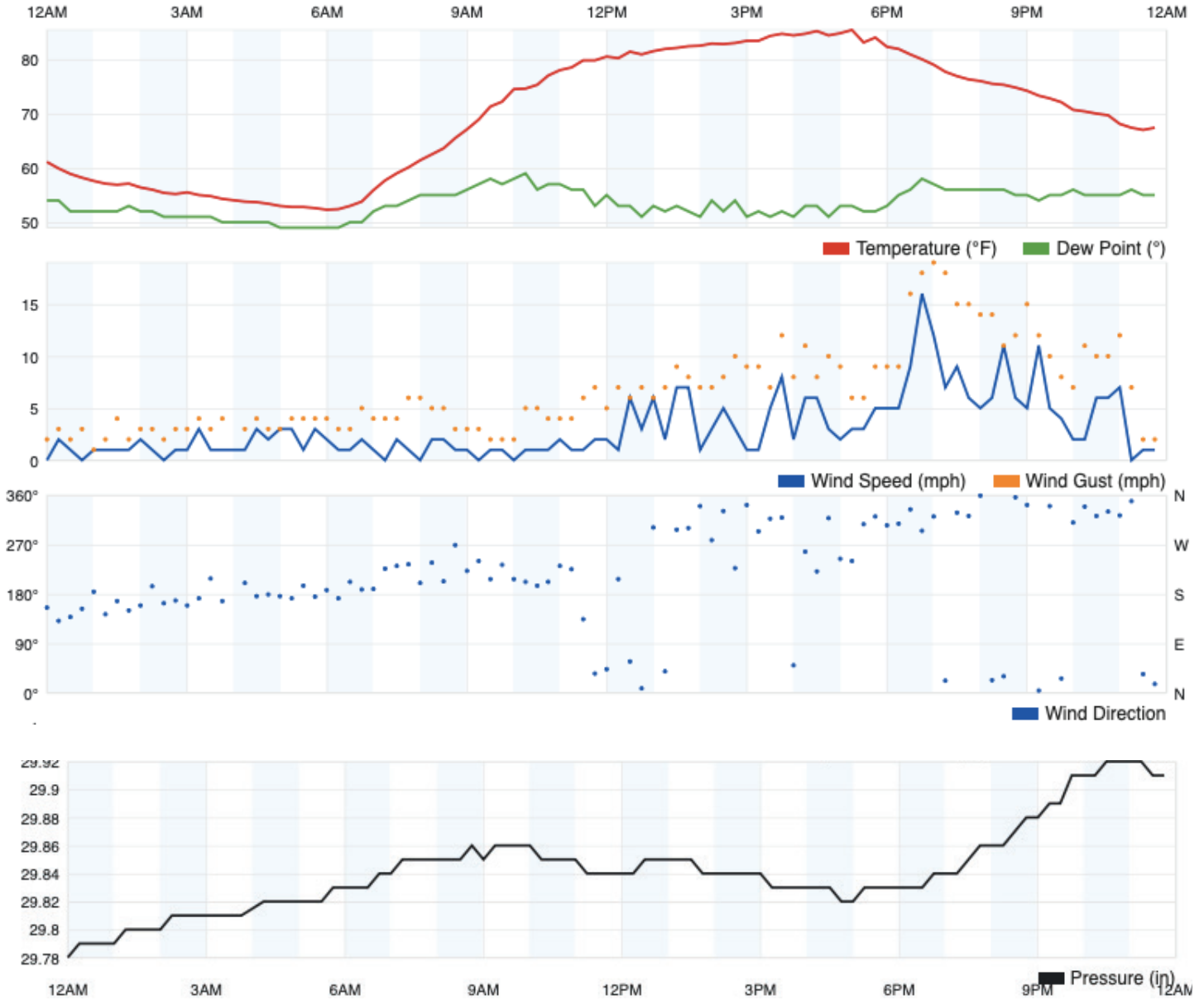
Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
▲		
Female	2205	29
Male	2505	25

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
▲		
0-19 years	439	0
20-29 years	890	0
30-39 years	1069	3
40-49 years	828	1
50-59 years	790	8
60-69 years	442	9
70-79 years	124	5
80+ years	128	28

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 13 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 14 of 66

Today

Tonight

Friday

Friday
Night

Saturday



Sunny then
Sunny and
Breezy

High: 73 °F



Mostly Clear
and Breezy
then Clear

Low: 44 °F



Sunny

High: 70 °F



Partly Cloudy

Low: 49 °F



Mostly Sunny

High: 69 °F

Thursday, May 28th

Cooler, but plenty of sun today.
Breezy NW wind with 25 to 35+ mph gusts.

Seasonable or cool temps through Sunday give
way to summer-like temps next week.

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Updated: 5/28/2020
4:00 AM Central

And Beyond

Temperatures will be a good 10 degrees cooler today when compared to Wednesday, as northwest winds gust around 30 mph. Dry conditions are expected for the rest of the week, other than potential light rain across portions of central South Dakota Friday overnight into Saturday morning.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 15 of 66

Today in Weather History

May 28, 1965: Low temperatures were mostly for the mid to upper 20s across a broad area. The low temperatures set back some crops and caused light damage to others. Some low temperatures around the area include; 26 degrees in Andover; 27 in Ipswich; 28 in Britton, Leola and McLaughlin; and 29 in Clear Lake, Eureka, Gettysburg, and Pierre.

1877 - A "terrific" two day long sandstorm (sand) blasted Yuma, AZ. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1880: An estimated F4 tornado hit Savoy, Texas. The storm killed 14 people, and 60 others were injured. It leveled the entire business and northeast residential sections. The tornado was described as "a funnel blazing with balls of fire."

1942 - The latest snowstorm of record for the state of Iowa left ten inches at LeMars, eight inches at Cherokee, and 7.5 inches at Waukon. Afternoon highs were in the lower 30s in parts of northwestern Iowa. (The Weather Channel)

1947 - A storm produced heavy snow across Wisconsin, with ten inches reported at Gay Mills. The snow damaged fruit and other trees, and downed power lines. The storm was followed by the coldest weather of the month for much of the High Plains Region and Missouri Valley. Williston ND reported a low of 21 degrees the morning of the 28th, and the next morning Cheyenne WY reported a morning low of 16 above zero. (David Ludlum)

1973: An F3 tornado moved east and struck the northern portion of Athens, Georgia. Destruction was massive near Athens, with losses estimated at ten million dollars. Damage from the storm included 545 homes and 17 businesses. Hundreds of large trees more than 100 years old were destroyed.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced torrential rains in Oklahoma and northern Texas. Lake Altus, OK, was deluged with nine inches of rain. Up to eight inches drenched northern Texas, and baseball size hail was reported north of Seminole and at Knickerbocker. Ten to 13 inch rains soaked central Oklahoma the last five days of May resulting in an estimated 65 million dollars damage, and forcing several thousand persons to evacuate their homes, many by boat or helicopter. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A sharp cold front began to usher cold, wet and windy weather into the western U.S. Thunderstorms in the Great Plains Region produced wind gusts to 80 mph near Brookings, SD. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather continued in Florida. Five cities reported record high temperatures for the date. The record high of 98 degrees at Lakeland, FL, was their fifth in a row. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Florida late in the day, with golf ball size hail reported at Kissimmee. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Two to five inches of rain over southeastern Ohio on the 28th and 29th capped an exceptionally wet month of May, and triggered widespread flooding. Flooding which resulted claimed three lives, and caused millions of dollars damage. Numerous roads in southeast Ohio were flooded and impassable, and many other roads were blocked by landslides. (Storm Data)

2015: Some parts of Oklahoma have seen more than a foot of rain during May 2015. Storms killed at least 17 people in Texas and Oklahoma, and more than a dozen are still missing. State climatologist Gary McManus from the Oklahoma Climatological Survey calculated the May rainfall total averaged over all Sooner State reporting stations through midday May 29 - 14.18 inches - was easily outpacing the previous record wet month, set in October 1941 (10.75 inches).

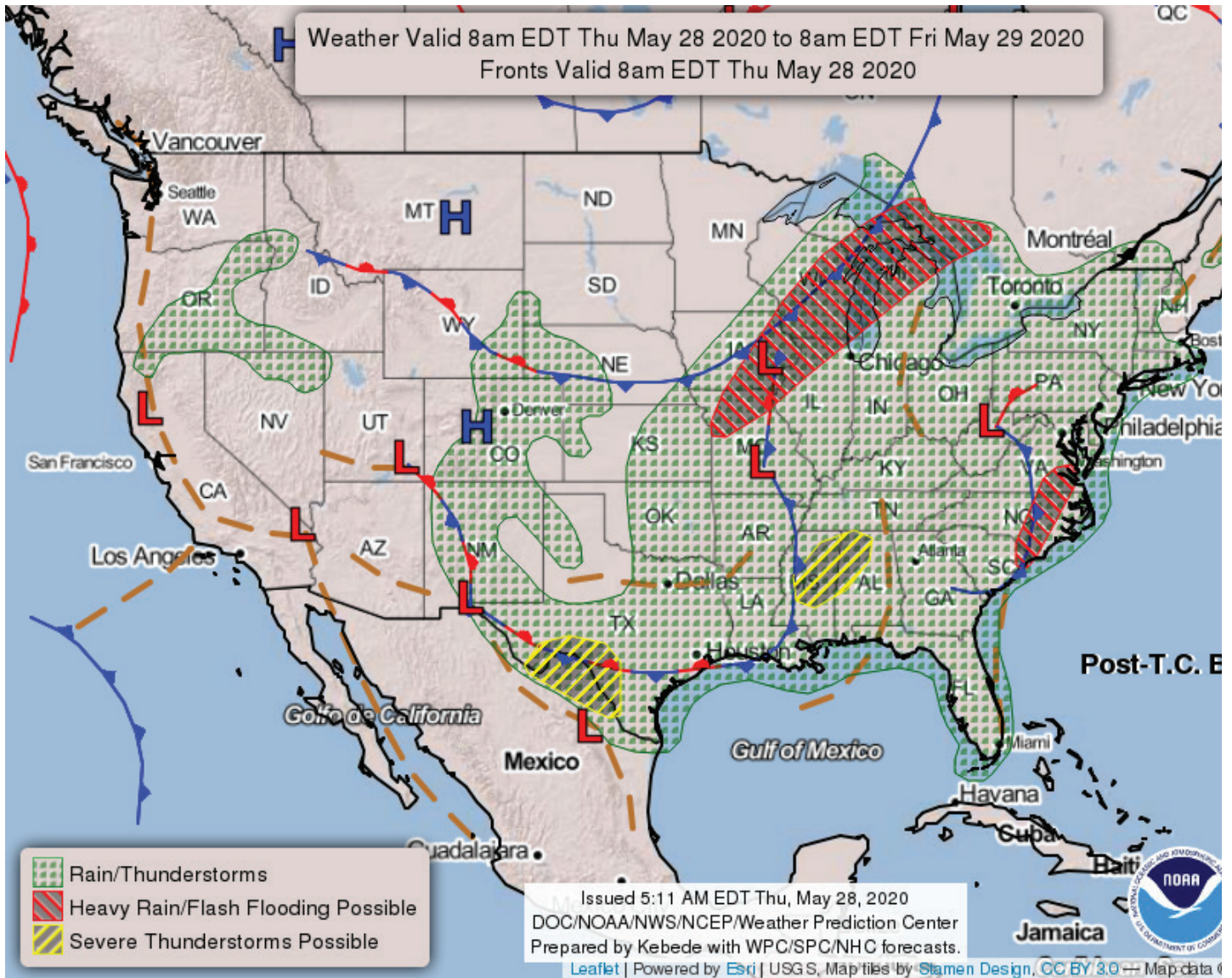
Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 16 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 86 °F at 5:09 PM
Low Temp: 52 °F at 5:58 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 6:52 PM
Precip: Trace

Record High: 102° in 1934
Record Low: 30° in 1965
Average High: 72°F
Average Low: 48°F
Average Precip in May.: 2.71
Precip to date in May.: 2.73
Average Precip to date: 6.74
Precip Year to Date: 4.63
Sunset Tonight: 9:12 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:50 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 17 of 66



FAITHFUL UNTIL THE END

At seventy-five Grandma Faith learned that cancer would soon take her home to heaven. She had been a faith-filled Christian all of her life. Realizing that her time with her family on this earth would soon be over, she called all of them together. After they gathered around her bed, she said in a calm, steady and joyful voice, "For many years I've shown you how to live like a Christian. Now I want to show you how to die like one!" Life after life was important to her.

Life after life was important to Paul, too. He planned for it, prepared for it, and personally looked forward to the time when he would be with his Lord. From the day he met his Savior, his values changed and his view of "things" on earth was different. Not only did he see life from an eternal perspective, but the only desire he had was for others to see life the way he did: through the eyes of the risen Christ. No matter what, Paul believed that Christians have a faith that makes life enjoyable and endurable, and hope to die with. The joy and happiness that came to him from serving his Lord satisfied his every need no matter how horrible his circumstances might have been. Paul understood that this life is temporary and transitional and that there was more than what is seen.

His words in Philippians "For me, living is living for Christ and dying is even better," reminds us that "life after life" will be far better than "life as it is" if we have faith and hope in Christ.

Prayer: We look to You, Heavenly Father, for faith for today, hope for tomorrow and purpose in between. Fill us with love for You and the lost whose lives are in our hands. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Philippians 1:20-26 For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 18 of 66

2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
 - **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
 - **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
 - **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
 - **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
 - **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
 - **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
 - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
 - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
 - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
 - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
 - **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
 - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
 - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
 - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
 - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
 - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
 - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
 - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
 - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
 - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
 - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
 - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
-
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
-
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

16-17-20-24-31

(sixteen, seventeen, twenty, twenty-four, thirty-one)

Estimated jackpot: \$87,000

Lotto America

16-20-35-36-48, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 3

(sixteen, twenty, thirty-five, thirty-six, forty-eight; Star Ball: three; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.75 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$336 million

Powerball

38-58-59-64-68, Powerball: 21, Power Play: 3

(thirty-eight, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty-four, sixty-eight; Powerball: twenty-one; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$114 million

Task force on missing Native Americans resumes sessions

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — A presidential task force charged with coming up with ways to address missing and slain Native Americans resumed tribal listening sessions Wednesday, encountering some technological glitches in the virtual version.

The task force held a handful of sessions in person with tribes and tribal organizations before the coronavirus hit. It's now turning to teleconferences and webinars to update tribes on its work and get input.

Three other sessions are scheduled through June 3.

The task force will develop protocols to apply to new and unsolved cases in Indian Country and create a multi-jurisdictional team to review cold cases. The task force made up of seven federal officials says it's on track to submit a progress report to the White House in November. A final report is due in November 2021.

"As all of these pieces of the puzzle come together, including that data collection, I think we're really going to make an impact, make a difference," said Katie Sullivan, who represents the Office of the Attorney General on the task force.

The U.S. Justice Department said 85 people, aside from those in the federal government, connected to Wednesday's session. Few spoke up to provide input, including only one tribal leader.

Their recommendations ranged from ensuring tribes have access to funding through self-governance contracts, not grants, and expanding the criminal jurisdiction for tribes on their own land. They also emphasized the need to dig deep into data and to ensure law enforcement is coordinating when responding to reports of missing people.

The Justice Department said it will work to improve the quality and clarity of the virtual sessions. Sullivan said the task force would take cues from tribes about when to resume in-person sessions.

Various states have formed similar groups to look at what has become an epidemic in Indian Country.

The National Institute of Justice estimates that 1.5 million Native American women have experienced violence in their lifetime, including many who are victims of sexual violence. On some reservations, federal studies have shown women are killed at a rate over 10 times the national average.

An Associated Press investigation in 2018 found that nobody knows precisely how cases of missing and murdered Native American women happen nationwide because many cases go unreported, others aren't

well documented and no government database specifically tracks them.

Noem considers using coronavirus funds for employee salaries

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is developing a plan to use some of the \$1.25 billion in federal coronavirus relief funds to pay state employees' March salaries and balance the budget, in case the Trump administration doesn't allow her to use the money to plug revenue shortfalls.

Liza Clark, the commissioner of the Bureau of Finance and Management, told lawmakers Wednesday that the Republican governor is considering using the relief funds for highway patrol troopers, judges and prison nurses, among others, as well as hazard pay bonuses for state employees who have been under stress as they responded to the pandemic. That would allow state government officials to put the money for those salaries towards making up losses in tax revenue, Clark said.

Noem has not released a complete plan on using the funds as she awaits further guidance from the Treasury Department on how to use the money. It has already stipulated that the expenses have to be related to the coronavirus response, cannot be already accounted for in the budget and have to come from March.

Noem said Tuesday she would prioritize health care, small businesses, education and local governments. "In the meantime, we're trying to find ways that they have given us a lot of leniency," Clark said.

Noem's plan didn't sit well with some lawmakers.

Taffy Howard, a Rapid City Republican, called the hazard pay bonuses for state employees "ridiculous" because those employees did not have to risk exposure to the virus.

She said she was frustrated because the administration is doing "everything possible to spend every single penny of that \$1.25 billion" when national debt is climbing.

Clark said employees have worked long hours over holidays as they scrambled to respond to the coronavirus.

Michael Saba, a Sioux Falls Democrat, was concerned about a lack of oversight on how the funds are being used. The state planned to launch a website to detail expenditure. Saba said he has not had access to much information from the state.

Meanwhile, Monument Health, the largest hospital system in the western part of the state, warned that they expect coronavirus infections to grow rapidly in the coming weeks. It said the region has experienced a low number of infections so far, but as people adhere less to social distancing, a surge is likely.

"Monument Health is prepared for this potential surge, but it will certainly stretch capacity from both a space and staffing standpoint," it said in a statement.

Health officials reported four new deaths from COVID-19 statewide, along with 57 new cases. The new deaths bring the state's toll to 54. The people who died were in their 30s, 50s and 60s and came from Minnehaha, Todd and Brown counties.

An employee at a Jack Link's Protein Snacks plant in Alpena also died after contracting COVID-19, according to the company, but that death does not appear to be reflected in Wednesday's update. Health officials wait until a death certificate has been issued to announce a death, resulting in a delay of several days.

The state's tally of confirmed cases rose to 4,710 people, but health officials say the number of infections is likely higher because many people may not display symptoms or have not sought testing for mild symptoms.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

Property owners file lawsuit over recently exposed mine

BLACK HAWK, S.D. (AP) — Residents of a Black Hawk neighborhood where a sinkhole has exposed an abandoned mine endangering their properties have filed a \$75.5 million lawsuit claiming government entities and private developers were negligent.

Attorney John Fitzgerald is representing more than 117 residents of the Hideaway Hills neighborhood where more than 40 residents have been evacuated and dozens more are afraid their homes could collapse since the sinkhole on April 27 exposed the gypsum mine.

It's "unbelievable" to think the state, county and everyone involved in developing the Hideaway Hills community didn't know it was built on top of an abandoned gypsum mine, Fitzgerald said.

The complaint contains 14 counts, most dealing with negligence, breach of warrant and failure to warn, against dozens of entities and individuals, including the state, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The defendants include the state of South Dakota, Meade County and its commissioners, title and engineering and real estate companies and others.

The lawsuit said four streets were built on top of mine waste rock, causing "extreme sinkage" to home foundations, cracked walls and clogged sewer lines due to shifting soil. Four other streets have homes experiencing the same issues after they were built on top of tailing ponds and/or sewage lagoons.

Some residents on the four other streets have also reported "extreme and unexplainable health problems," the lawsuit said.

Gov. Kristi Noem said last week the state reclaimed the area after conducting surface mining in the mid-1980s.

But "the state had no knowledge at any time that this mine was in place, it's not in our records," Noem said, adding that the state drilled into the earth but never hit mine cavities.

Body found in Pennington County believed to be hunter

DEERFIELD LAKE, S.D. (AP) — Sheriff's officials said they believe they have found the body of a missing hunter who was the subject of extensive searches in western South Dakota.

The body was found near Deerfield Lake in Pennington County Tuesday afternoon.

Based on clothing and other factors, the remains appear to be Larry Genzlinger, authorities said.

He was last seen in October 2019 while elk hunting with his nephew in the area where the body was discovered.

An individual repairing a fence called 911 after discovering the body. An autopsy is scheduled for Wednesday, according to the Rapid City Journal.

Genzlinger's nephew called law enforcement around 7:30 p.m. the day he went missing.

"An extensive search began, but because of the high elevation and continued snow cover, the winter passed without additional searches," the sheriff's office said. "With the spring thaw, search efforts resumed most recently with regional canine teams."

Out-of-state canine teams plus searchers with South Dakota-based local, state and federal agencies logged nearly 2,500 miles while looking for Genzlinger and for Serenity Dennard who was 9 when she ran away from the Black Hills Children's Home near Rockerville in February 2019.

The most recent search was conducted May 16 through 19.

Fires, looting rock Minneapolis after man's death; 1 dead

By DOUG GLASS Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Fires burned and looters struck Thursday after violent protests over the death of a black man in police custody rocked Minneapolis for a second straight night, with damage stretching for miles across the city.

Amid the violence, a man was found fatally shot Wednesday night near a pawn shop. Asked to confirm reports that he had been shot by a store owner, police spokesman John Elder said that was "one of the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 22 of 66

theories.”

Protesters began gathering in the early afternoon Wednesday near the city’s 3rd Precinct station, in the southern part of the city where 46-year-old George Floyd died on Memorial Day after an officer knelt on his neck until he became unresponsive. Protesters skirmished with officers, who fired rubber bullets and tear gas in a repeat of Tuesday night’s confrontation.

On Thursday morning, smoke hung over Minneapolis and looters carried merchandise from a damaged Target store with no interference by police. Video of the store’s interior showed empty clothing racks and shelves and debris strewn about. Obscenities were spray painted on the exterior of the store.

Protests spread to other U.S. cities. In California, hundreds of people protesting Floyd’s death blocked a Los Angeles freeway and shattered windows of California Highway Patrol cruisers on Wednesday.

It was the second night of violent protest in Minneapolis since the death of Floyd, whom police were seeking to arrest outside a Minneapolis grocery store on a report of a counterfeit bill being passed. A bystander’s cellphone video showed an officer kneeling on Floyd’s neck for almost eight minutes as he eventually became unresponsive.

Mayor Jacob Frey tweeted for calm early Thursday. “Please, Minneapolis, we cannot let tragedy beget more tragedy,” he said on Twitter. He also asked for the public’s help in keeping the peace.

The officer and three others were fired Tuesday, and on Wednesday, Frey called for him to be criminally charged.

Frey asked Gov. Tim Walz to activate the National Guard, a spokesman confirmed Thursday. The governor’s office didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment. Walz tweeted for calm Wednesday night, calling the violence “an extremely dangerous situation” and urging people to leave the scene.

On Wednesday night, officers responding to a reported stabbing near the protests found a man lying on the sidewalk with what turned out to be a bullet wound, Elder said. The man was pronounced dead at a local hospital. Elder said a suspect was in custody but said the facts leading up to the shooting were “still being sorted out.”

Rising caseloads in India, Russia underline reopening risks

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and NICK PERRY Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — India saw another record daily jump in coronavirus cases Thursday while Russia reported a steady increase in its caseload even as it moved to swiftly ease restrictions in sync with the Kremlin’s ambitious political plans.

The developments come as the United States crossed a somber landmark of 100,000 coronavirus fatalities, meaning that more Americans have died from the virus than were killed in the Vietnam and Korean wars combined.

India, home to more than 1.3 billion people, reported more than 6,500 new infections, another record daily surge that brought the nation’s total to more than 158,000 infections. The spike comes as the nation’s two-month-old lockdown is set to end Sunday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government is preparing a new set of guidelines to be issued this weekend, possibly extending the lockdown in worst-hit areas as it promotes economic activity. Earlier this month, the country allowed reopening of shops and manufacturing and resumption of some trains and domestic flights and vehicles’ movement.

South Korea on Thursday reported its biggest jump in coronavirus cases in more than 50 days, a setback that could erase some of the hard-won gains that have made it a model for the rest of the world. Health officials warned that the resurgence is getting harder to track and social distancing and other steps need to be taken.

And in Russia, high daily numbers of new coronavirus infections underlined the risks of reopening the economy, which has been badly battered by the outbreak.

Earlier this week, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia will hold a military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the Nazi defeat in World War II on June 24, declaring that the nation has

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 23 of 66

passed the peak of the pandemic that had forced the Kremlin to postpone the celebrations.

The massive May 9 parade marking Russia's most important holiday was intended to emphasize the nation's key role in World War II and underline its international clout, with French President Emmanuel Macron and other world leaders set to attend. The Russian Foreign Ministry said Thursday that Moscow will now resend the invitations to Macron and others.

Russian media reported that the Kremlin now also plans to go ahead with another high-priority event on Putin's political agenda — a plebiscite on constitutional amendments that could allow him to stay at the helm through 2036 if he chooses. The Russian president postponed the vote from April because of the outbreak.

The government's anti-coronavirus task force reported more than 8,300 new infections Thursday, about the same as in the previous day and lower than the peak levels of more than 11,000 cases earlier this month. The total number of infections topped 379,000, the world's third-largest caseload behind the United States and Brazil.

Russian officials reported 174 new deaths, repeating the highest daily toll recorded two days ago and bringing the nation's total to 4,142.

Some Kremlin critics alleged that the nation's relatively low mortality of about 1% of those infected might reflect manipulations driven by the authorities' desire to set a positive environment for both the parade and the constitutional vote.

Russian officials have angrily rejected the allegations, charging that the low toll was a result of sweeping preventative measures, broad testing and efficient treatment.

Moscow, which accounted for about half of all infections, ordered to ease the tight lockdown in place since late March, saying that non-food stores, dry cleaners and repair shops are allowed to open Monday. The capital's mayor also announced that residents will be allowed to walk in the parks with some restrictions and engage in sports in the mornings.

Across the vast country, numerous provinces already have eased the lockdowns.

The situation in many other countries also underscores the difficulty in reopening economies.

In the U.S., Las Vegas casinos and Walt Disney World have made plans to reopen, and crowds of unmasked Americans are expected to swarm beaches over the summer months. Public health officials predict a resurgence by fall.

But despite the risks, the pressure for easing restrictions has risen across the globe as the economic pain inflicted by the pandemic has deepened.

French unemployment claims jumped 22% in April, as 843,000 more people sought work and the virus lockdown prevented companies from hiring. The jobless ranks in France don't include 8 million people who received government-funded temporary unemployment in April and are gradually returning to work, the employment office said.

While the temporary unemployment scheme is credited with stabilizing the French economy during the virus crisis, the country is still facing its worst recession since World War II and permanent job cuts are likely.

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 5.7 million people and killed over 355,000, with the U.S. having the most confirmed cases and deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Europe has recorded about 170,000 deaths.

The true death toll from the virus is widely believed to be significantly higher, with experts saying many victims died without ever being tested.

Some nations are seeing improvements. New cases in Spain and Italy have fallen steadily for two months. China reported just two new cases on Thursday, both from abroad. New Zealand has reported no new cases for six days and has just eight active cases remaining.

Lives Lost: Veteran guarded Nazis during war crimes trial

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

Emilio DiPalma was, as he liked to say, just a kid from western Massachusetts when he found himself in a front-row seat to history as a courtroom guard in Nuremberg, Germany, during the first and most famous trial of Nazi war criminals in 1945.

The 19-year-old had fought Germans on the front lines in World War II, lost friends in battle and witnessed horrors that would forever change his view of the world. Then he found himself standing guard over Adolf Hitler's top officers as they were brought to justice for atrocities committed by the Third Reich.

"To this day, I can hardly believe that any human being could do such cruel things to another," DiPalma wrote in the memoir he published with the help of his daughter decades later.

DiPalma died on April 8 at the age of 93 after contracting the coronavirus at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home in Massachusetts, where he was being cared for because of dementia. More than 70 other veterans sickened with the virus at the Soldiers Home have died, making it one of the deadliest known outbreaks at a long-term care facility in the U.S.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of an ongoing series of stories remembering people who have died from coronavirus around the world.

The son of Italian immigrants, DiPalma grew up in Springfield, Massachusetts, before being drafted into the Army in 1944 at the age of 18. He left home a "happy go-lucky" kid who was gung-ho for battle, he said, but the gravity of the war quickly crashed down on him.

"It doesn't take long that you realize this is not John Wayne movies, this is serious. And you grow up an awful lot while you're up there," DiPalma said in a video interview with the New York State Military Museum.

As a member of the 79th Infantry Division, DiPalma watched friends die and had close calls himself.

Once, he was climbing up an embankment when a fellow soldier stepped in front of him and "took a hit at that very same moment, a hit that was surely meant" for DiPalma, he wrote. Another time, medics were carrying a soldier on a stretcher, when DiPalma realized the injured man was his friend. "Death took him away as I looked back at him," he recalled.

After the Allies defeated Germany, DiPalma was sent to Nuremberg, where he was first tasked with making copies of documents detailing Nazi war crimes. Soon, he became a guard at the Nazi's prison cells. Eventually, he was asked to serve a guard in the courtroom, where he stood at the witness box with his arms clasped behind his back while Hitler's deputies were grilled over their atrocities.

DiPalma found himself face to face with Nazi leaders, including the head of the German Air Force, Hermann Goering. While court was in recess, Goering would often ask DiPalma for a drink of water, so DiPalma would go get him a cup from the water bag down the hall. Goering would turn his nose up and say "Bah, Americanish," and give it back, DiPalma recalled.

Tired of his behavior, one day DiPalma filled Goering's cup from with toilet water instead. "Ahhh, gute vasser!" a smiling Goering said, complimenting the drink, DiPalma wrote.

"I guess I felt it was my little contribution to the war effort," DiPalma wrote.

DiPalma left Nuremberg in July 1946 and was discharged. Three months later, Goering killed himself hours before he was set to be hanged for his war crimes.

After the war, DiPalma met his future wife, Louise Catelotti, while on a double date. They were supposed to be dating other people but immediately hit it off, his daughter, Emily Aho, said. They raised four girls in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, and DiPalma "had his hands full" during their teenage years, Aho said while laughing. Louise DiPalma died of ALS – Lou Gehrig's disease – in 2006.

DiPalma worked as a crane operator and a volunteer firefighter for their small town and enjoyed hunting, gardening, fishing and spending time at their beach house in Connecticut during the summer. He rarely talked about his days in the war, Aho said, but his wartime experiences left a lasting impact on how he saw others.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 25 of 66

"It made me a little bit leery of everybody ... When I came back, I never trusted anybody," he said in the military museum interview. "And I think that has made me a better person. It tells you what the real world is, rather than a bowl of cherries," he said.

Aho convinced her father to come with her to Germany in 2000 while she was doing research for a book she was writing. At the Palace of Justice, he excitedly showed her around and was "like a kid again," Aho recalled. They sat down in the courtroom and footage from the trials began playing showing a young DiPalma standing guard over Goering in the witness box.

"I just sat there and cried," his daughter said.

After they returned home, she bought him a tape recorder for his 75th birthday and used those recordings to help him craft his memoir, titled "Just a Kid: A Guard at the Nuremberg Trials."

DiPalma sometimes struggled to talk about some things he saw, but he believed it was important for it not to be forgotten, Aho said.

"He wanted to share his story so that this wouldn't happen again," she said.

Chinese lawmakers endorse Hong Kong national security law

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's legislature endorsed a national security law for Hong Kong on Thursday that has strained relations with the United States and Britain and prompted new protests in the territory.

The National People's Congress approved the bill as it wrapped up an annual session that was held under intensive anti-coronavirus controls. The vote was 2,878 to 1 with six abstentions, in line with the high-profile but largely ceremonial body's custom of near-unanimous support for all legal changes decided by the ruling Communist Party.

The law will alter Hong Kong's mini-constitution, or Basic Law, to require the territory to enforce measures to be decided by the NPC's standing committee, a small body controlled by the ruling party that handles most lawmaking work.

The law reflects the determination of President Xi Jinping's government to tighten control over Hong Kong following 11 months of anti-government protests. Activists in Hong Kong say the law will undermine the "high degree of autonomy" promised to the former British colony when it was handed back to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" framework and might be used to suppress political activity.

Premier Li Keqiang, the country's No. 2 leader, defended the law as consistent with Beijing's promises.

"The decision adopted by the NPC session is designed for steady implementation of 'one country, two systems' and Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability," Li said at a news conference.

The law and the way it is being enacted prompted U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday to announce Washington will no longer treat Hong Kong as autonomous from Beijing. That could hurt the territory's attractiveness as a business center.

Pompeo's notice adds Hong Kong to the Trump administration's conflicts with China over trade, technology, religious freedom, Chinese handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the status of Taiwan, the self-ruled island Beijing claims as its own territory.

Li called for mutual respect and Sino-U.S. cooperation to promote "extensive common interests" in resolving global problems and promoting trade, science and other fields.

"Both countries stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation," Li said.

On Thursday, three pro-democracy lawmakers were ejected from Hong Kong's legislative chamber during a debate over a bill that would criminalize insulting or abusing the Chinese national anthem.

Also Thursday, the NPC approved a government budget that will increase spending to generate jobs in an effort to reverse an economic slump after Chinese industries were shut down to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Private sector analysts say as much as 30% of the urban workforce, or as many as 130 million people, lost their jobs at least temporarily during the shutdown. They say as many as 25 million jobs might be lost for good this year.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 26 of 66

The budget calls for giving local governments 2 trillion yuan (\$280 billion) to spend on meeting goals including creating 9 million new jobs. That is in line with expectations of higher spending but a fraction of the \$1 trillion-plus stimulus packages launched or discussed by the United States, Japan and Europe.

Li, the premier, said Beijing is in a "strong position to introduce new measures" if necessary but wants to avoid flooding the economy with too much money. He said 70% of planned spending is aimed at putting wages in workers' pockets in order to support consumer spending, the biggest driver of the economy. "We will do our utmost to keep China's economic growth stable," Li said. "At the same time, we must make sure that all measures taken are well calibrated."

In an anti-virus measure, Li sat on a dais in the Great Hall of the People, the seat of the legislature in central Beijing, and talked by video link with reporters at a media center 4 miles (6.5 kilometers) away. The reporters, wearing masks, sat in widely spaced chairs in an auditorium, watching Li on a video screen.

The premier called for international cooperation in fighting the coronavirus pandemic but didn't answer a question about how an investigation into the origins of the pandemic demanded by Washington and some other governments should be conducted.

Beijing has resisted pressure for an inquiry following criticism it mishandled the early response to the disease that emerged in central China in December. China has blocked beef imports from four Australian suppliers in apparent retaliation for Australia's calls for an investigation.

Many more likely sought US jobless aid even as layoffs slow

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government is set to sketch its latest picture Thursday of the layoffs that have left tens of millions of people unemployed but have slowed as states increasingly allow businesses to reopen.

Even with companies calling some laid-off employees back to work, millions more likely filed for unemployment benefits last week after nearly 39 million sought aid in the previous nine weeks as the coronavirus paralyzed the economy.

The pace of layoffs has declined for seven straight weeks, a sign that the cratering of the job market may have bottomed out. By historical standards, though, the number of weekly applications remains enormous.

The job cuts reflect an economy that was seized by the worst downturn since the Great Depression after the virus forced the widespread shutdown of businesses. The economy is thought to be shrinking in the April-June quarter at an annual rate approaching 40%. That would be, by far, the worst quarterly contraction on record.

Violence again rocks Minneapolis after man's death; 1 killed

By DOUG GLASS Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A man was shot to death as violent protests over the death of a black man in police custody rocked Minneapolis for a second straight night, with protesters looting stores near a police precinct and setting fires that continued to burn Thursday morning.

Police said they were investigating Wednesday night's death as a homicide and had a suspect in custody, but were still investigating what led to the shooting.

Protesters began gathering in the early afternoon near the city's 3rd Precinct station, in the southern part of the city where 46-year-old George Floyd died on Memorial Day after an officer knelt on his neck until he became unresponsive.

News helicopter footage showed protesters milling in streets near the city's 3rd Precinct station, with some running in and out of nearby stores. A Target, a Cub Foods, a Dollar Tree and an auto parts store all showed signs of damage and looting. As darkness fell, fire erupted in the auto parts store, and city fire crews rushed to control it. Protesters set other fires in the street.

Officers could be seen surrounding the nearby precinct, not attempting to intervene in the looting.

Multiple fires burned early Thursday at buildings and smoke hung over the city. Fire crews worked to

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 27 of 66

put out flames. Blocks of buildings with broken-out windows and other damage from looting were seen, and KSTP-TV reported that some people were seen going through buildings.

Police spokesman John Elder said officers responding to a reported stabbing near the protests found a man lying on the sidewalk with what turned out to be a bullet wound. The man was pronounced dead at a local hospital. Elder said a suspect was in custody but said the facts leading up to the shooting were "still being sorted out."

It was the second night of violent protest since the death of Floyd, whom police were seeking to arrest outside a Minneapolis grocery store on a report of a counterfeit bill being passed. A bystander's cellphone video showed an officer kneeling on Floyd's neck for almost eight minutes as he eventually became unresponsive.

Mayor Jacob Frey tweeted for calm early Thursday. "Please, Minneapolis, we cannot let tragedy beget more tragedy," he said on Twitter. He also asked for the public's help in keeping the peace.

The officer and three others were fired Tuesday, and on Wednesday, Frey called for him to be criminally charged.

Protesters also gathered Wednesday evening at the officer's suburban home as well as the Minneapolis home of Mike Freeman, the Hennepin County prosecutor who would make a charging decision in the case. No violence was reported in those protests.

As the protests stretched into the evening, Police Chief Medaria Arradondo urged calm. In an interview with KMSP-TV, he noted the internal investigation as well as the FBI's investigation of Floyd's death and said they offer a chance at justice.

"Justice historically has never come to fruition through some of the acts we're seeing tonight, whether it's the looting, the damage to property or other things," he said.

Elder said officers from St. Paul, Metro Transit and the state patrol were helping police the area.

In California, hundreds of people protesting Floyd's death blocked a Los Angeles freeway and shattered windows of California Highway Patrol cruisers on Wednesday.

Lawmakers ejected in Hong Kong debate on Chinese anthem bill

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Three pro-democracy lawmakers were ejected from Hong Kong's legislative chamber Thursday morning, disrupting the second day of debate on a contentious bill that would criminalize insulting or abusing the Chinese national anthem.

The legislature's president, Andrew Leung, suspended the meeting minutes after it began and ejected Eddie Chu for holding up a sarcastic sign about a pro-Beijing lawmaker that read "Best Chairperson, Starry Lee."

A second pro-democracy lawmaker was thrown out for yelling after the meeting resumed, and then a third after rushing forward with a large plastic bottle in a cloth bag that spilled its brownish contents on the floor in front of the president's raised dais.

"We have wanted to use any method to stop this national anthem law getting passed by this legislature, which is basically controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, because the law is just another way of putting pressure on Hong Kong people," Chu said outside the chamber.

In Beijing, China's national legislature ratified a proposal to impose a national security law on Hong Kong, a Chinese territory that is supposed to have a high degree of autonomy under a "one-country, two systems" framework.

The measure is designed for the "steady implementation of 'one country, two systems,' and Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability," Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said. He was referring to the arrangement under which the territory retained its own Western-style social, legal and political institutions after being handed over from British to Chinese rule in 1997.

Speaking at a news conference Thursday following the closing of the NPC's annual session, Li offered

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 28 of 66

no details about what specific areas the law would cover.

Joining the U.S. and other countries in expressing concern, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said it was important for Hong Kong to have a "stable and democratic development."

"We are deeply worried about the National People's Congress this time conducting the vote amid deep concern within the international community and Hong Kong citizens" Suga said.

The city's pro-democracy opposition sees both the security legislation and the anthem law as assaults on that autonomy, and the U.S. has called on China to back off on the security law.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo notified Congress on Wednesday that the Trump administration no longer regards Hong Kong as autonomous from mainland China, setting the stage for the possible withdrawal of the preferential trade and financial status the U.S. accords the former British colony.

Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong, who rose to prominence as a student leader during 2014 pro-democracy demonstrations, applauded the U.S. announcement.

Sanctions or the freezing of Hong Kong's special economic status would "let Beijing know it is a must to completely withdraw and stop the implementation of the national security law," Wong said.

China blocked a U.N. Security Council meeting to discuss the legislation Wednesday, with China's U.N. Ambassador Zhang Jun tweeting that Hong Kong is "purely China's internal affairs."

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said ahead of Pompeo's announcement that China would take necessary steps to fight back against any "erroneous foreign interference in Hong Kong's affairs."

Chu, the ejected lawmaker, said the legislature's president had objected to his placard calling Lee an "illegal chairperson" during Wednesday's first day of debate, so he made a new one that called her the best chairperson instead.

Lee was recently elected chair of a key committee that sent the anthem bill to the full legislature for consideration. Her election, which the pro-democracy opposition contends was illegal, ended a monthslong filibuster that had prevented the committee from acting on the bill and other legislation.

After the meeting restarted, pro-democracy lawmaker Ray Chan started yelling as Leung explained his decision to remove Chu, and the legislative president suspended the meeting again and ordered Chan ejected, too.

Other pro-democracy lawmakers surrounded Chan, who then hid under a table, as security officers tried to remove him. He eventually was carried out by officers.

A longer suspension followed the ejection of Ted Hui, who kicked the plastic bottle toward the president's dais after security officers tussled with him and it fell from his hands.

Members left the chamber, security guards sprayed disinfectant and cleaning workers arrived to wipe the carpet. Then firefighters in full protective gear entered and collected evidence. They appeared to take samples from the floor using swabs.

Hui later described the contents as a rotten plant, and said he wanted Leung to feel and smell the rotting of Hong Kong's civilization and rule of law, and of the "one country, two systems" framework that democracy activists feel is under attack by China's ruling Communist Party.

"I wanted him to taste it, unfortunately it (fell) on the ground because I was hit by security guards," he said.

Hui rushed toward Leung as pro-democracy lawmakers were demanding that the legislature's president explain which rules of procedure banned sarcastic placards, and then all held up or displayed the same "Best Chairperson, Starry Lee" sign.

Trump continues to claim broad powers he doesn't have

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Threatening to shut down Twitter for flagging false content. Claiming he can "override" governors who dare to keep churches closed to congregants. Asserting the "absolute authority" to force states to reopen, even when local leaders say it's too soon.

As he battles the coronavirus pandemic, President Donald Trump has been claiming extraordinarily sweep-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 29 of 66

ing powers that legal scholars say the president simply doesn't have. And he has repeatedly refusing to spell out the legal basis for those powers.

"It's not that the president doesn't have a remarkable amount of power to respond to a public health crisis. It's that these are not the powers he has," said Stephen Vladeck, a University of Texas School of Law professor who specializes in constitutional and national security law.

First it was Trump's assertion that he could force governors to reopen their economies before they felt ready. "When somebody's the president of the United States, the authority is total," he claimed.

Trump soon dropped the threat, saying he would instead leave such decisions to the states. But he has revived the idea in recent days as he has tried to pressure governors to allow churches and other places of worship to hold in-person services, even where stay-at-home orders and other limits on large gatherings remain in effect.

Asked Tuesday what authority he had to enforce such a mandate, Trump was cagey.

"I can absolutely do it if I want to," he said. "We have many different ways where I can override them and if I have to, I'll do that."

The White House declined to spell out any specific statute, but White House spokesman Judd Deere said in a statement that "every decision the president has made throughout this pandemic has been to protect the health and safety of the American people."

"Getting the nation back to work, back to sporting events, back to churches, back to restaurants, and doing so safely and responsibly is the president's shared goal with governors and the private sector, but the cure cannot be worse than the disease," Deere said.

Trump "certainly does not have the power under any reasonable reading of the Constitution or federalism to order places of worship to open," said Matthew Dallek, a historian at George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management who specializes in the use of presidential power.

But Dallek said that just because Trump doesn't have the authority to do most of the things he's threatened, doesn't mean he won't, for instance, try to sign executive orders taking such action anyway — even if they are later struck down by the courts.

"What has limited Trump previously? Not very much. So I think he will do whatever seems to be in his best interest at any particular moment," Dallek said.

Trump, he said, also could try to abuse his powers to leverage other instruments of government, from the Department of Justice to the IRS, to push for investigations or launch regulatory crackdowns to punish states, cities or companies. Trump also has showed he's willing to exercise powers that modern presidents have largely avoided, including his recent purging of inspectors general.

When the president declared the pandemic a national emergency back in March, he activated more than 100 different statutory authorities. Yet Trump, said Vladeck, has failed to exercise many of them.

"I think one of the real ironies of this entire moment is that the president actually has a remarkable array of powers that he hasn't brought to bear. All the while he continues to claim stunning powers that he doesn't have," he said.

That includes the Defense Production Act, which Trump could have used far more aggressively to force companies to mass produce supplies including masks and ventilators. Instead, he used it in more limited ways. And while the Justice Department has threatened to join lawsuits against states that move too slowly, a statement of interest filed by the department in Illinois last week didn't raise any federal constitutional claims.

Even if he doesn't follow through on threats, Trump's statements still can have consequences as he uses his bully pulpit.

"He's still trying to wield his often outrageous interpretations of the law as a cudgel to bludgeon others," said Joshua Geltzer, founding executive director of the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection at Georgetown University Law Center.

Trump is now on a tear against Twitter after the social media platform, which he uses to speak directly to his more than 80 million followers, slapped fact-check alerts on two of his tweets claiming that mail-in

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 30 of 66

voting is fraudulent.

"Twitter is completely stifling FREE SPEECH, and I, as President, will not allow it to happen!" he tweeted Tuesday. A day later Trump added that: "Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen."

While Congress could pass legislation further regulating social media platforms, Trump "has no such authority," said former federal judge Michael McConnell, who now directs Stanford Law School's Constitutional Law Center. "He is just venting."

"There is absolutely no First Amendment issue with Twitter adding a label to the president's tweets," added Jameel Jaffer, executive director at the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, who won the case that prevents Trump from banning his critics from his Twitter feed. "The only First Amendment issue here arises from the president's threat to punish Twitter in some way for fact-checking his statements."

But Jack Balkin, a Yale University law professor and First Amendment expert, said that's not Trump's point. "This is an attempt by the president to, as we used to say in basketball, work the refs," he said. "He's threatening and cajoling with the idea that these folks in their corporate board rooms will think twice about what they're doing, so they won't touch him."

For Rutgers University media professor John Pavlik, who studies online misinformation, Trump is simply trying to fire up his political base.

"For Trump," he said, "this is about politics."

5 things to know today - that aren't about the virus

By The Associated Press undefined

Your daily look at nonvirus stories in the news:

1. VIOLENCE AGAIN ROCKS MINNEAPOLIS Protests over the death of George Floyd in police custody rock the city again, with protesters looting stores and setting fires. Earlier, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas in a skirmish with protesters.

2. CHINA ENDORSES HONG KONG NATIONAL SECURITY LAW Activists in the semi-autonomous territory say the law will undermine civil liberties and might be used to suppress political activity.

3. WHAT FAILED MADURO COUP LEADER DID Jordan Goudreau, a former Green Beret, flew to a planning meeting in Colombia aboard a plane owned by a businessman with ties to the socialist government, AP finds.

4. FUGITIVE COLLEGE STUDENT CAPTURED Peter Manfredonia, a suspect in a crime spree that included two slayings in Connecticut, was caught in Maryland after a six-day search, police say.

5. SURVEILLANCE BILL IN DOUBT Legislation extending surveillance authorities that the FBI sees as vital in fighting terrorism has run into bipartisan opposition, dooming its prospects.

Virus, heat wave and locusts form perfect storm in India

By EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — As if the coronavirus wasn't enough, India grappled with scorching temperatures and the worst locust invasion in decades as authorities prepared for the end of a monthslong lockdown despite recording thousands of new infections every day.

This triple disaster drew biblical comparisons and forced officials to try to balance the competing demands of simultaneous public health crises: protection from eviscerating heat but also social distancing in newly reopened parks and markets.

The heat wave threatens to compound challenges of containing the virus, which has started spreading more quickly and broadly since the government began easing restrictions of one of the world's most stringent lockdowns earlier this month.

"The world will not get a chance to breathe anymore. The ferocity of crises are increasing, and they're

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 31 of 66

not going to be spaced out," said Sunita Narain of New Delhi's Center for Science and Environment.

When her 6-year-old son woke up with a parched throat and a fever, housekeeper Kalista Ekka wanted to bring him to the hospital. But facing a deluge of COVID-19 patients, the doctor advised Ekka to keep him at home despite boiling temperatures in the family's two-room apartment in a low-income neighborhood in South Delhi.

"The fan only makes it hotter but we can't open the window because it has no screen," and thus no defense against malaria and dengue-carrying mosquitoes, Ekka said.

In a nearby upmarket enclave crowded with walkers and joggers every morning and at dusk — some with face coverings, some without — neighbors debated the merits of masks in an online forum.

In the heat, "it is very dangerous to work out with a mask. So a Catch-22 situation," said Asmita Singh.

Temperatures soared to 118 degrees Fahrenheit (47.6 degrees Celsius) in the capital New Delhi this week, marking the warmest May day in 18 years, and 122 F (50 C) in the desert state of Rajasthan, after the world's hottest April on record.

India suffers from severe water shortages and tens of millions lack running water and air conditioning, leaving many to seek relief under shady trees in public parks and stepwells, the ancient structures used to harvest rainwater.

Though many people continued wearing masks properly, others pushed them onto chins, or had foregone them altogether.

Cyclone Amphan, a massive super storm that crossed the unusually warm Bay of Bengal last week, sucked up huge amounts of moisture, leaving dry, hot winds to form a heat wave over parts of central and northern India.

At the same time, swarms of desert locusts have devastated crops in India's heartland, threatening an already vulnerable region that is struggling with the economic cost of the lockdown.

Exasperated farmers have been banging plates, whistling or throwing stones to try to drive the locusts away, and sometimes even lighting fires to smoke them out. The swarms appeared poised to head from Rajasthan north to Delhi, but on Wednesday a change in wind direction sent them southward toward the state of Madhya Pradesh instead.

K.L. Gurjar, a top official of India's Locust Warning Organization, said his 50-person team was scrambling to stop the swarms before breeding can take place during India's monsoons, which begin in July. Otherwise, he said, the locusts could destroy India's summer crops.

Meanwhile, India reported another record single-day jump of more than 6,500 coronavirus cases on Thursday, pushing up the total to 158,333 confirmed cases and 4,531 deaths.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is preparing a new set of guidelines to be issued this weekend, possibly extending the lockdown in worst-hit areas while promoting economic activity elsewhere, with unemployment surging to 25%.

The sudden halt to the Indian economy when the lockdown began March 25 has been devastating for daily laborers and migrant workers, who fled cities on foot for their family homes in the countryside.

The government started running special trains for the migrants, but deaths on the rails because of starvation or dehydration have been reported. Others immediately put into quarantine centers upon their arrival in home districts have tested positive for COVID-19, adding to the burden of severely strained rural health systems.

To jump start the economy, Modi's environment ministry has moved to lower liabilities for industrial polluters and given private players the right to explore for coal and mine it. Cheap oil will fuel recovery efforts worldwide.

Indian environmental journalist Joydeep Gupta said that the perfect storm of pandemic, heat and locusts show India must go green. He said the government should implement policies to safeguard biodiversity and offer incentives for green energy to reduce greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

Instead, "the government is promoting the same sectors of the industry that have caused the multiple crises in the first place," he said.

But Narain said other government initiatives that expand federal agriculture employment, cash transfer and food ration programs help India deal more effectively with its threats.

"It's building coping abilities of the very poor to be able to deal with stress after stress after stress," she said.

Patrons under plastic: Restaurants get creative in virus era

By THOMAS ADAMSON and OLEG CETINIC Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Dining at a table where each person is enclosed by a clear plastic shield might look and sound futuristic, but it could be one way for some restaurants to reopen. It also might help out if your companion orders escargots, heavy on the garlic.

The prototype plastic shields are known as the "Plex'eat," and they resemble big clear lampshades suspended from the ceiling. They are being showcased temporarily at H.A.N.D., a Parisian restaurant seeking a way to reopen its dining room as coronavirus restrictions are relaxed.

As restaurateurs around the world seek to resume in-person dining amid the pandemic, they want to adhere to social distancing rules while also trying to serve as many customers as health and safety measures will allow.

Some are putting mannequins at every other table to put some space between the actual customers, like at Augustas and Barбора, a restaurant in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. Some of its faux diners are dressed casually, while others look as though they are at a ball. The clothes showcase the work of local fashion designers.

"We want to fill the space with fun things," said owner Patrikas Ribas.

Vilnius Mayor Remigijus Simasius called the initiative a "perfect match of communal spirit and creativity working side by side."

In Hofheim, Germany, the Beef'n Beer is using large teddy bears seated at some tables to keep diners properly spaced apart. They also ensure a cozy, less-sterile atmosphere.

At Amsterdam's Mediamatic restaurant, the owners have erected small glass houses that surround each table, served by waiters in protective shields.

While many restaurants offered take-out and delivery during the health crisis to keep generating at least some income, such practices are less common in France, although Michelin starred chefs such as Alain Ducasse have started doing take-out service.

Owners are seeking solutions that will coax back customers while also easing their anxiety about catching the virus.

Mathieu Manzoni, the director of H.A.N.D, said he thinks the plastic shields are a "pretty, more poetic" solution for restaurateurs who fear that social distancing could cut their capacity by half or more.

"There is a bit of a panic," Manzoni said.

Makers of the Plex'eat say they have received more than 200 preorders around the world, including from France, the U.S. and Japan.

Designer Christophe Gernigon said he got the idea after visiting a store in Bangkok "with three individual domes with chairs where people would sit and listen to music."

He merged the idea with the large face shields that have proliferated since the pandemic began, although there is no filtration system to keep any viruses from spreading.

Being French, there's a version for more intimate dining, of course: a dome that cocoons its occupants in romantic isolation from the rest of the room.

Among other revamped restaurants across Europe:

— At El Salamanca, a Barcelona beachfront restaurant known for paella, menus are gone and customers use their smart phones to scan a QR code to consult what is on offer.

— Greek restaurants are using salt and pepper sachets inside of shakers, and menus are either thrown away after each meal or are laminated and wiped down regularly. Many waiters have face shields. Some tavernas have staff in matching face masks.

— In the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, a restaurant on the banks of the Volga and Oka rivers has set up 20 plastic huts for couples. It is awaiting approval from authorities to open if it meets safety standards.

— Italian restaurants are using contact tracing. Diners are supposed to reserve tables ahead of time and owners are keeping their contact information: If someone subsequently reports testing positive, the restaurant can quickly identify and contact those who ate there at the same time.

Some coffee bars in central Rome also are attaching stylish arched glass partitions to divide tabletops down the middle.

'Didn't give a damn': Inside a ravaged Spanish nursing home

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Zoilo Patiño was just one of more than 19,000 elderly people to die of coronavirus in Spain's nursing homes but he has come to symbolize a system of caring for the country's most vulnerable that critics say is desperately broken.

When the Alzheimer's-stricken 84-year-old succumbed in March on the same day 200 others died across Madrid, funeral homes were too overwhelmed to take his body and he was instead left locked in the same room, in the same bed, where he died.

Spanish army disinfecting teams going through the Usera Center for the Elderly more than 24 hours later were stunned to come across Patiño's body and it made headlines around the world, with the country's Defense Minister Margarita Robles describing "elderly abandoned, if not dead, on their beds."

"It wasn't ideal to have a possibly infectious body there," says José Manuel Martín, a staff member who took the soldiers through the home. "But what else could we have done? We didn't even have protective gear to be able to put the body in a bag."

The grim find triggered soul-searching over Spain's nursing homes, which have had more deaths than those in any other country in Europe. Much of the scrutiny has focused on the lower end of the market, government-owned homes like the Usera center, where day-to-day operations have been contracted to companies often controlled by multinational private-equity firms that seek to turn profits quickly by cutting staff, expenses —and some say care — to the bone.

An Associated Press investigation into the 160-bed nursing home where Patiño and 41 others died revealed widespread cost-cutting for years leading up to the pandemic and a series of questionable decisions at the height of the crisis. That included the facility's top doctor admonishing workers for weeks not to wear masks, and allowing six crucial days to pass before complying with a government order to separate the sick from the well.

Dozens of interviews with workers, relatives and residents themselves, along with publicly available documents, painted a picture of a stripped-down, "fast-food" version of elder care. They described broken equipment, missed medications and nurse's assistants responsible for caring for 10 or more residents at a time, with meals often cut short and some residents told to wear diapers to reduce trips to the bathroom.

The private company that operates Usera disputed AP's reporting of poor care and declined to comment on calls by elder care watchdogs and others to reform a system that puts private-equity profit incentives on public nursing homes.

"This model is not working." Alberto Reyero, the top Madrid regional government official in charge of elder care, warned in February, barely a month before the new virus spread like wildfire through the capital's nursing homes.

"We have to find another way."

A cacophony of coughing echoed through the Usera center on the morning of March 12, with dozens of residents falling ill to fevers and other flu-like symptoms.

But an existing protocol in the home to deal with infectious outbreaks had yet to be implemented. Masks, gloves and other protective gear weren't mandated, and testing for COVID-19 was something employees had only seen on TV.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 34 of 66

That morning, wearing a mask she bought herself, an auxiliary nurse set out for the top floor of the four-story, red-brick center where the sickest residents were staying. Halfway up the stairs, she ran into the facility's doctor.

"Take off that crap, it's useless," the nurse, who asked that her name not be used for fear of reprisal, says she was ordered. "He said all I was doing was scaring the residents."

On March 16, after Patiño woke up with a fever, difficulty breathing and no appetite, the Usera center's physician convened a meeting to inform workers that a first suspected coronavirus case had been detected on the premises. Those in attendance say they were reminded again that the policy was still to avoid using masks, with the doctor playing a recording of somebody he presented as an expert saying they were useless and would only spread panic.

Four days later, Patiño became one of the first residents to die at Usera, and then the deaths began coming in twos and threes a day.

On March 21, the Spanish government ordered an immediate separation of nursing home residents into four groups: those infected, which was something nearly impossible to confirm given that no testing kits were available; those with symptoms; those suspected of having had contact with a positive case; and those who appeared healthy.

The order was meant to be carried out in 24 hours. But by then at least 30 workers were ill, and according to internal documents reviewed by AP, the separation didn't begin until March 27, six days after the order was issued.

By the end of March, 18 people had died. And twice as many would die in the following days.

The auxiliary nurse who had first been told to scrap her mask described the situation inside the facility as "unsustainable."

She also began feeling dizzy with difficulty breathing before she tested positive for the virus herself, among about half of the Usera center's staff of 131 who would eventually fall ill to COVID-19.

"When they should have been protecting all of us workers and residents, they basically left us exposed, abandoned."

Nursing homes have become a flashpoint in the global pandemic, with more than a third of the U.S.'s 100,00 deaths in such facilities, and higher proportions reported in such countries as Canada, Ireland and France. Spain's more than 19,000 nursing home deaths is out of an official overall death toll of about 27,000, but that is likely an undercount because it includes only those who tested positive. Some estimates put the actual toll as high as 43,000.

Spain's 4.5 billion-euro (\$4.9 billion) eldercare industry has 373,000 elderly people in more than 5,400 nursing homes, and it has increasingly become profit-driven, with 7 out of 10 beds privately run.

Nearly 45% of the remaining public ones, around 45,000 beds, are additionally offered to be managed by private companies, the vast majority of which are backed by domestic and foreign private-equity firms eager to get a return on typically short-term investments.

Whether these public homes, like the Usera center, were hit harder than privately owned ones in the coronavirus pandemic is not clear, since the Spanish government has yet to break down death and infection numbers by specific homes. But some of the biggest outbreaks that have been publicized are in homes that are government-owned and privately operated. In the Madrid area alone, another facility managed by the same company as Usera saw at least 46 deaths, and two nursing homes managed by a competitor recorded 96 and 27 deaths, respectively.

Joseba Zalakain, director of SIIS, a research center focused on social issues, says that Spain's public nursing homes managed by these multinationals are, as a rule, "centers with few resources that are very badly equipped, squeezing the idea of the low-cost so much that they are crippled to react to something like a pandemic."

But private operators point fingers at the underfunding of nursing homes by the government, and the fact that coordination with the national health system is poor. José Ramón Repullo, an economist at Spain's

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 35 of 66

top health institute, Carlos III, says the blame is shared. "If the state is awful at managing these facilities, it's even worse at supervising them," he says.

At the Usera center, a publicly-owned facility in a working-class section of Madrid, the first changes came in 2012 after Quavita, a growing player in Spanish elder care backed by a British private-equity fund, won the contract to operate the home with the lowest bid. It came in 2 million euros (\$2.2 million) below the 11.5 million euros (\$12.6 million) that officials calculated that running the facility for four years would cost.

María Mendoza, who has worked at Usera for 12 years as an auxiliary nurse, said the new owners imposed staff cuts almost immediately and "everything went downhill from there."

They decided a doctor during the night shift was no longer needed, and that they could get by with fewer nurses. Mendoza says the facility's maintenance also was kept to a minimum. A toilet or an elevator would break and go unrepaired for weeks. There were leaks. And cranes used to lift residents from their beds would break and not be fixed.

"The place started to fall apart," Mendoza says.

By the end of 2016, Usera's management changed hands when Quavita sold its nursing home operations to DomusVi, which was founded by one of France's richest businessmen, Yves Journal. It has since become Spain's leading private operator of nursing homes, with more than 20,000 beds in over 150 facilities.

DomusVi's majority stake was held at the time by the French private equity firm, PAI Partners, which sold out just months later to the London-based private-equity firm, ICG. Soon after, ICG applied to refinance 1 billion euros in debt.

All that churn meant further cuts at Usera at a time when studies showed that the elderly moving into such facilities were increasingly dependent on additional help. Auxiliary nurses who do most of the hands-on patient work were the biggest cutback since the private equity-backed firms took control at Usera, dropping from 43 to 32 overall, with no more than 17 on at any one shift.

"The ratio became pretty much one auxiliary nurse for every 10 elders," says Florencia Yacovano, who has been a receptionist at the Usera center for more than a decade. "Imagine rushing to get 10 of them out of bed, showering them and dressing them in just over one hour, in time for breakfast. It's literally impossible."

Beatriz Cano, a 70-year-old who has lived in the home for more than a decade with a chronic illness, says staffing constraints caused residents to be showered every other day rather than daily; they were told to limit toilet use and wear diapers in off hours; and there was little patience for those needing extra help to eat.

"If someone needs half an hour to be fed slowly ... it's just easier to give up after two spoonfuls and write down that the resident has no appetite today," she says.

Esther Navarro says her 97-year-old mother was given sleeping pills in the morning, rather than at night, without justification, and staff would leave the woman in bed, sometimes until the afternoon. More than once she found her mother's pills on the floor.

"The feeling of my siblings and myself, when leaving the residence, was always the same — they are cheating us, they are laughing at us," Navarro added. "We always felt frustration and helplessness."

The complaints finally caught the regional government's attention. DomusVi was fined 83,400 euros (\$91,800) last year for not meeting the technical requirements of its contract and specifically for the lack of maintenance of the facilities. Years earlier, they had been fined for having insufficient personnel and for failing to make agreed-upon improvements.

AP learned that on Feb. 26, three DomusVi executives were called to the regional government offices and informed that their contract would be taken away for their latest offense, outsourcing the employment of nurses. They were told it would be a matter of paperwork over a few weeks before it was settled.

Then the coronavirus struck.

Mendoza, the auxiliary nurse, says there seemed to be a shift after it became clear DomusVi was about to be permanently replaced.

"Because this company already had one foot outside," she says, "they didn't give a damn about us."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 36 of 66

In an email, DomusVi rejected all claims made to AP by workers, relatives and residents at the Usera nursing home, saying it took measures to face the coronavirus "since the end of February," handled Patiño's body properly and separated residents according to their symptoms "in the stipulated time."

DomusVi refused to comment on the government's decision to strip its Usera contract and the broader criticism of public-private partnerships. It said nursing homes have been "unfairly" criticized during the pandemic when many coronavirus deaths happened in hospitals, adding "it is the health system that has to cure residents."

ICG — the private-equity firm that has lent to or invested in hundreds of companies, including a British software firm, an Italian drug maker and a French supplier of fasteners — defended DomusVi as a "high-quality business." ICG added it is "doing everything we can to support the businesses that we invest in."

Last month, over 1,000 academics and civil society leaders signed a manifesto calling for an "urgent revision" of the long-term care model and its "corresponding scenario of public funding."

Responding to part of the criticism, the Madrid government told the AP that the pandemic "has shown that a new model is necessary" that guarantees appropriate health care in nursing homes. "A model that focuses on the needs of the people, who now have a longer life expectancy and live their last years with a higher level of dependency."

This month, dozens of relatives of those who died in 15 Madrid nursing homes, sued the regional government and individual home directors, accusing them of reckless homicide, degrading treatment, abuse of power and denial of help.

Several plaintiffs were families who had loved-ones in Usera, including Elena Valero, whose father died of COVID-19 and whose mother recovered from it.

If any good can come out of the crisis, she says, it would be an overhaul of the elder care system in Spain. "What we want is that the model goes from being hostels where they are fed and given a bed, run on the cheap, to residences with proper health and social care, with dignity."

Croatian charity offers help as lives turn during outbreak

By DARKO BANDIC Associated Press

PULA, Croatia (AP) — Winding stone streets, usually packed with tourists, silent as a graveyard. Restaurants closed. Beaches deserted. Hotels bolted shut.

When Europe locked down in response to the spread of the coronavirus, northern Croatia's picturesque Istria region shut down, as well. And the consequences were dire for the people who live there and depend on visitors' spending.

Enter Igor Loparic, and Our Dream Their Smile -- a charity Loparic established a decade ago, and has refocused to help people living on the Adriatic Sea cope with the pandemic.

Bordering Italy and Slovenia, Istria is a favorite spot for sea lovers throughout Europe. While tourism could improve over the summer, important months already have been lost.

As local businesses suffered, even once well-off families have found themselves struggling. Many have turned to Loparic's group for help with food, other necessities or legal advice.

Sometimes, Loparic said, a family would tumble into a crisis when one member lost a job. "We had a family of four recently, the father's salary was cut by 50 percent, the mother had expected to work in pre-season but she didn't."

Apart from the locals, Loparic said, seasonal workers from other parts of Croatia who flocked to Istria as early as March to find jobs were left stranded, unable to return home during the lockdown and left with no income.

"People don't know how to cope in the pandemic times," said Loparic, a 35-year-old former port authority employee. "We fear that the worst is yet to come."

The newest member state of the European Union, Croatia has one of the weakest economies in the bloc. It is largely dependent on tourism along the Adriatic.

Loparic said some 100 businesses have already closed down in Istria alone and more could follow once

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 37 of 66

state aid is no longer available after the lockdown. Croatia has eased anti-virus measures, gradually re-opening borders for visitors in a bid to salvage as much of the season as possible.

Based in the Istrian town of Pula — Loparic's hometown, known for a Roman arena and a now-bankrupt shipyard — the charity was set up modestly in 2010 with an idea to "help an old woman or a man rather than just sit somewhere and drink coffee."

Now operating with dozens of devoted volunteers, it won support throughout the country, earning honors and expanding to areas outside Istria.

"I know everything about my users," said volunteer Jasna Mosnja. "It is important to approach everyone individually and it is important that no one feels bad about getting help."

Among those in need are the Roma, or Gypsies, in Istria. Jetis Bajrami, a community representative and former national boxing team member, says Loparic's charity has made a difference.

When people lost their jobs, "thank God they had Igor," said Bajrami. "He's been helping a lot of my Roma people and I thank him for that."

Loparic said the charity has more than 1,300 families on its list, including 400 to 500 in Istria alone. Each month, 50 to 60 families receive aid.

While the coronavirus crisis has brought much misery, Loparic said it has brought out the good in people as well. Donations for the charity have flowed, he said.

"We really do this from our hearts and what connects us is definitely love," he said. "You can only do this out of love for people."

Mail-in voting could turn Election Day into Election Week

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

A shift to mail voting is increasing the chances that Americans will not know the winner of November's presidential race on election night, a scenario that is fueling worries about whether President Donald Trump will use the delay to sow doubts about the results.

State election officials in some key battleground states have recently warned that it may take days to count what they expect will be a surge of ballots sent by mail out of concern for safety amid the pandemic. In an election as close as 2016's, a delayed tally in key states could keep news organizations from calling a winner.

"It may be several days before we know the outcome of the election," Jocelyn Benson, Michigan's Democratic secretary of state, said in an interview. "We have to prepare for that now and accept that reality."

Ohio's Republican secretary of state, Frank LaRose, pleaded for "patience" from the public. "We've gotten accustomed to this idea that by the middle of the evening of election night, we're going to know all the results," LaRose said Wednesday at a forum on voting hosted by the Bipartisan Policy Center. "Election night reporting may take a little longer" this year, he warned.

Delayed results are common in a few states where elections are already conducted largely by mail. But a presidential election hasn't been left in limbo since 2000, when ballot irregularities in Florida led to weeks of chaos and court fights.

For some election experts and Democrats, the prospect of similar uncertainty is especially worrisome this year, as Trump disparages mail-in voting as fraudulent and has claimed without evidence that widespread mail balloting will lead to a "rigged" election.

"It's very problematic," said Rick Hasen, a University of California-Irvine law professor. "There is already so much anxiety about this election because of the high levels of polarization and misinformation."

Hasen is among the experts who have been studying the strains on the U.S. electoral system during the pandemic. He recently convened a bipartisan group of academics to recommend safeguards for a disputed election. Some members have gamed out dramatic scenarios like state legislatures or governors refusing to seat electors, or a candidate refusing to cede power.

Meanwhile, some Democratic operatives, lawyers and even the presumptive presidential nominee have grown increasingly vocal with their concerns that Trump will try to meddle in the election. Joe Biden re-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 38 of 66

cently said he thinks Trump may use his office to intervene: "Mark my words, I think he is going to try to kick back the election somehow, come up with some rationale why it can't be held."

Trump campaign spokesman Ken Farnaso called the accusation "another unsubstantiated creation of the liberal conspiracy theory machine."

Trump said last year in an interview that he would accept the results of the 2020 election. Since then, however, the coronavirus has dramatically changed how Americans vote.

As voters look for a safer alternative to in-person voting, election officials from both parties have promoted mail-in and absentee voting options, and requests for mail ballots have surged in the primaries. Many states expect to be scrambling to process millions more in November.

While each state runs its own process, those mail ballots can take longer to count. In some states, the ballots can be accepted several days after Election Day, as long as they are postmarked before polls closed. And while some states count the ballots as they come in, others — notably the critical battlegrounds of Michigan and Pennsylvania — have laws that forbid processing mail ballots until Election Day, guaranteeing the count will extend well past that night.

That doesn't mean The Associated Press and other news organizations won't call a winner. The AP regularly calls races before the official vote count is complete, using models based on partial results, past races and extensive polling.

But in particularly tight contests, the AP and other news organizations may hold off on declaring a winner. That could lead to a national roller coaster ride of shifting results.

In Arizona in 2018, for example, Republican Martha McSally was narrowly winning the initial tally of in-person votes and mail ballots that had arrived days before Election Day. More than a week later, after election officials were able to tally all the mail votes that arrived on Election Day, Democrat Kyrsten Sinema won the senatorial race by more than 2 percentage points. Arizona changed its procedures to try to speed up the vote count this year.

In Michigan and Pennsylvania, two states that helped hand Trump his 2016 victory, Democrats have pushed to relax the laws forbidding them from processing ballots before Election Day but faced GOP resistance.

In Michigan, GOP leaders had argued it would be improper to handle ballots before Election Day. But on Wednesday, the state's GOP-controlled Senate signaled a shift, advancing a bill that would allow the processing of absentee ballots the day before Election Day. Benson said even if the bill passes, she expects a slow count in November.

"It's certainly going to be a challenge," Benson said.

In Pennsylvania, only 4.6% of the state's voters voted either early or by mail in 2016. But now both parties are urging voters to send in mail ballots for next week's primary elections, and officials are overwhelmed by absentee ballot requests.

Philadelphia says it won't even begin to count mail ballots until after the end of primary day, June 2. Forrest K. Lehman, elections director in Lycoming County in central Pennsylvania, warned: "In terms of November, if they don't let us start canvassing sooner than the day of the election, there's no way anyone can responsibly call Pennsylvania on election night."

Another factor that could delay the count is Democrats' push to require states to accept mail ballots postmarked on Election Day. Democrats have filed more than a dozen lawsuits demanding that standard and note that the U.S. Supreme Court required it for Wisconsin's April 7 election.

But, because of that requirement, Wisconsin couldn't release results from its election until April 13.

Failed Maduro coup leader flew on pro-govt magnate's plane

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press Writer

MIAMI (AP) — It was mid-January and Jordan Goudreau was itching to get going on a secret plan to raid Venezuela and arrest President Nicolás Maduro when the former special forces commando flew to

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 39 of 66

the city of Barranquilla in Colombia to meet with his would-be partner in arms.

To get there, Goudreau and two former Green Beret buddies relied on some unusual help: a chartered flight out of Miami's Opa Locka executive airport on a plane owned by a Venezuelan businessman so close to the government of the late Hugo Chávez that he spent almost four years in a U.S. prison for trying to cover up clandestine cash payments to its allies.

The owner of the Venezuela-registered Cessna Citation II with yellow and blue lines, identified with the tail number YV-3231, was Franklin Durán, according to three people familiar with the businessman's movements who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation. Durán over two decades has had numerous business ties with the socialist government of Venezuela, making him an odd choice to help a band of would-be-mercenaries overthrow Maduro, the handpicked successor of the late Chávez.

Durán and his associates are now at the center of multiple investigations in the U.S., Colombia and Venezuela into how Goudreau, a combat veteran with three Bronze Stars but little knowledge of Venezuela, managed to launch a failed raid that ended with the capture and arrest of his two special forces colleagues.

Durán's role and his closeness to top officials have revived allegations floated by opposition leader Juan Guaidó and U.S. officials that he was secretly working on Maduro's behalf and had co-opted "Operation Gideon," the name of Goudreau's foiled plot.

"There's financing here from the dictatorship," Guaidó said in an interview following the raid with EVTV Miami, an online media outlet run by Venezuelan exiles. "A businessman, a front man closely linked to the host of the gossip show," he said in reference to socialist party boss Diosdado Cabello, whose weekly TV program, fed by nuggets from Venezuela's vast intelligence network that he controls, first aired in March the accusations of a planned attack by Goudreau.

Maduro has claimed that Guaidó, whose aides signed a 42-page agreement last year with Goudreau in Miami outlining a plan to take control of the country, was behind last month's raid, with backing from the CIA or the Drug Enforcement Administration. However, Goudreau said he was never paid and the two sides angrily split. For its part, the Trump administration has denied it was behind the plot, with the president joking that had the U.S. been involved it would have gone very badly for Maduro.

The Associated Press on May 1 first broke the story of Goudreau's bizarre plan to train a volunteer army made up of a few dozen Venezuelan military deserters at clandestine camps along the border in neighboring Colombia. They planned to attack military bases and ignite a popular uprising. Goudreau's partner, in what some opposition leaders called a suicide mission, was retired Venezuelan army Gen. Cliver Alcalá, who had been living in Barranquilla after fleeing his homeland in 2018.

Alcalá surrendered to U.S. authorities in March after he was indicated on drug charges, just a few days after Colombian police seized a cache of weapons that the retired military officer said belonged to the rebel cadre he and Goudreau were readying to bring down Maduro.

But despite no overt U.S. support, a poorly-trained force that stood no chance against Venezuela's sizable military and indications that Maduro's spies had infiltrated the group, Goudreau nonetheless pushed ahead with his plans.

On May 3 — two days after the AP article — he appeared in a video from Florida claiming that a few dozen "freedom fighters" he commanded had launched a beach raid to enter Venezuela and capture Maduro. The invaders were caught almost immediately and the embattled leader paraded on state TV the American combatants as evidence of a U.S.-backed coup attempt. The raid has been widely ridiculed on social media as the "Bay of Piglets," in reference to the 1961 Cuban fiasco.

Why the plan went forward remains a mystery. But much attention has now shifted to the role of Durán and his brother Pedro.

Both men were quietly arrested Sunday in Venezuela, although Pedro was later released, according to Edward Shohat, Franklin Durán's Miami-based lawyer. The government has yet to comment on the arrests and has not indicated if it intends to charge either with a crime.

The story of Goudreau's flight aboard Durán's plane was first reported by the PanAm Post, a conservative online publication run by mostly Venezuelan exiles from Miami.

According to Colombian flight documents the PanAm Post shared with the AP, the Jan. 16 trip was

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 40 of 66

chartered by Servicios Aereos Mineros (SERAMI), a for-hire airline that started in the gold-producing Venezuelan state of Bolivar.

An aviation industry executive confirmed the authenticity of the documents and said SERAMI was used by the Durán brothers to charter their frequent flights between Colombia and Venezuela.

The person said Franklin Durán would frequently travel to Barranquilla — passenger manifests provided to the AP show he made at least four flights between the two countries between November 2019 and January 2020 — to bring back food and other supplies to Venezuela, where U.S. sanctions and years of mismanagement have stripped store shelves of many goods.

SERAMI is partly owned by Juan Carlos Ynfante, according to two people familiar with the company. Ynfante was arrested last year in Grand Cayman island for piloting an aircraft with \$135,000 in undeclared cash. Ynfante was also named as SERAMI's president in a 2008 U.S. federal forfeiture case in which a plane with the company's logo was seized in Ft. Lauderdale trying to smuggle 150 kilograms of cocaine.

In addition to Goudreau and Durán's two longtime pilots, passengers on the mid January flight included Luke Denman and Airan Berry — two of the former Army veteran's colleagues from the 10th Special Forces Group in Stuttgart, Germany, where he was based before retiring from the U.S. Army in 2016. The two Texas natives have said in videotaped confessions that they believed Goudreau's company, Silvercorp USA, had been hired by Guaidó.

Its unclear why the men traveled on the plane to Colombia or if Durán even knew about it. Goudreau hung up when contacted by the AP on Wednesday. He did not respond to a text messages asking about the flight.

Also on the flight was Yacsy Álvarez. The would-be insurgents in the Colombian camps described the 39-year-old as a trusted aide to Alcalá who also worked for Durán.

One volunteer soldier said that when he needed to fly for meetings between Bogota and Barranquilla it was Álvarez who would purchase his tickets. On other occasions, he would electronically transfer her via Zelle, the digital payments network, small amounts of money he had collected from friends and family to feed the ragtag army. Denman, in his jailhouse statement, said it was Álvarez who drove him and Berry from Barranquilla to a rustic camp where the rebels were training.

Álvarez's whereabouts are unknown.

Álvarez was named in 2017 director of Industrias Venoco de Centroamerica, two years after the company was registered in Panama. The company is a subsidiary of Industrias Venoco, a once market-leading auto lubrication manufacturer that Durán controlled before it was nationalized by Chávez in 2010.

Durán at the time he lost Venoco was serving out a 4-year sentence in the U.S. for acting as an unregistered agent of Chávez. The firebrand leader had sent Durán to pressure businessman Alejandro Antonini, who was implicated in the so-called "Suitcase Scandal" when an attempt to smuggle \$800,000 in cash to the 2007 campaign of former Argentine President Cristina Fernandez aboard a chartered aircraft was caught.

During the trial, prosecutors pointed out that Durán used to carry a badge identifying him as a Venezuelan naval intelligence officer. The men urged their one-time friend to take the fall and stay quiet but unbeknownst to them Antonini was cooperating with the FBI and recorded their conversations.

Upon Durán's release in 2011 and return to Venezuela, a legal battle with the Venezuelan state to reclaim Venoco ensued. Durán maintained a low profile while he received treatment for cancer. Eventually some of Venoco assets, including the brand name, were returned to him, including a unit in Barranquilla. His brother, going by the artistic name Pedro "The Voice," tried to develop a career singing salsa.

A woman answering the phone at the Panama-based unit listed on Venoco's website said the company is privately held and run from Barranquilla. An email sent to the Panama unit through Venoco's website went unanswered and the two phone numbers listed for the Barranquilla-based unit on Venoco's website did not work.

Durán was also the founder of Ruibal & Durán, a company that used to sell bulletproof vests and other equipment to Venezuela's security forces — gear that would've been valuable to an invading army.

He and his brother were also close to Alcalá. Photos circulating on social media show Pedro Durán and Alcalá together including one where the two are sitting casually around a dining table with the army

general sporting a Venoco t-shirt.

Franklin Durán's U.S.-based attorney on Wednesday declined to discuss what, if any relationship, he had with Goudreau or to discuss the January flight.

But Durán appears to have never wavered in his support of the anti-imperialist revolution to which he owed his fortune.

"I'm a man of principles and convictions, which were put to the test when they tried to force me to accept a set-up against the institutions of Venezuela," he wrote in a public letter from his Texas prison cell in 2010. "Despite all the weight of the empire's media, and having spent more than nine months in solitary confinement, I never gave up my values."

College student wanted in 2 Connecticut slayings is captured

By PAT EATON-ROBB Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — A college student sought by police as a suspect in a crime spree including two slayings in Connecticut has been captured in Maryland, police said Wednesday night.

Peter Manfredonia, 23, had been the subject of a six-day search involving several police agencies and the FBI.

He was found in the area of a truck stop in Hagerstown, Maryland. He was not injured and no officers were hurt during the arrest, Connecticut State Police said.

"The suspect will face justice and this will bring closure. This is what is important for the families of the victims," said Trooper First Class Christine Jeltema, a spokeswoman for Connecticut State Police.

Manfredonia was wanted in the machete killing of 62-year-old Ted DeMers and the wounding of another man in Willington, Connecticut, on Friday. Cyndi DeMers, the victim's wife, has said Manfredonia was looking for a female acquaintance when he came walking down the road in front of their home wearing a motorcycle helmet and her husband offered him a ride to his motorcycle.

The University of Connecticut senior also went to another man's home, held him hostage, stole his guns and truck and drove about 70 miles (110 kilometers) southwest to Derby, Connecticut, state police said.

In Derby, police found Manfredonia's high school friend, Nicholas Eisele, 23, shot to death in his home on Sunday. Authorities believe Manfredonia then forced Eisele's girlfriend into her car and fled the state. The girlfriend was found unharmed with her car at a rest stop near Columbia, New Jersey.

A gun that police believe was used in the slaying of Eisele was recovered near where Manfredonia was taken into custody, Jeltema said.

Authorities have not offered a possible motive for the crimes.

Investigators tracked Manfredonia to Pennsylvania, where police said he took an Uber to a Walmart in East Stroudsburg, not far from the New Jersey border. Police discovered through interviews with the driver and from security camera footage that Manfredonia walked behind the store and onto railroad tracks, authorities said.

A man fitting his description was spotted Tuesday night near Scranton, Pennsylvania, prompting another search there. And police later suspected Manfredonia to be in the Hagerstown, Maryland, area, where a ride-hailing service dropped off someone matching his description Wednesday.

A lawyer for the suspect's family, Michael Dolan, said they were relieved the search had ended peacefully. Dolan said Manfredonia, a Newtown native, was an honors engineering student at UConn who had a history of depression and anxiety but had not shown signs of violence.

"This came as a total surprise to everybody based on Peter's past," he said. "He's been a kind-hearted person who has no history of violence or any trouble with the law."

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont offered thanks to police agencies including those in other states that were involved in the search.

"We are appreciative of their unified approach to this disturbing situation," Lamont said on Twitter.

UN: Virus could push 14 million into hunger in Latin America

By CHRISTINE ARMARIO Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — The U.N. World Food Program is warning that upward of at least 14 million people could go hungry in Latin America as the coronavirus pandemic rages on, shuttering people in their homes, drying up work and crippling the economy.

New projections released late Wednesday estimate a startling increase: Whereas 3.4 million experienced severe food insecurity in 2019, that number could more than quadruple this year in one of the world's most vulnerable regions.

"We are entering a very complicated stage," said Miguel Barreto, the WFP's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean. "It is what we are calling a hunger pandemic."

Signs of mounting hunger are already being felt around the region, where desperate citizens are violating quarantines to go out in search of money and food and hanging red and white flags from their homes in a cry for aid. Many of the hungry are informal workers who make up a sizable portion of Latin America's workforce, while others are newly poor who have lost jobs amidst an historic economic downturn.

"I am the captain of the family," said Dieufete Lebien, 57, a now unemployed construction worker in Haiti. "A boat that is sinking."

The number of people going hungry is likely to be higher than the U.N. projection, which only takes into account numbers in the 11 countries where the organization operates. The estimate does not include, for example, Venezuela, where one in every three people faced hunger last year, according to the food agency's 2019 study.

The escalating hunger comes as the COVID-19 pandemic increasingly ravages Latin America. Brazil now ranks second globally in the number of coronavirus infections, behind the U.S., and rising levels in Peru, Chile, Mexico and elsewhere are stretching hospitals thin, increasingly in poor urban and remote rural communities.

U.N. food agency executive director David Beasley warned in April that an additional 130 million people could be "pushed to the brink of starvation" worldwide by the end of 2020. The new estimates for Latin America indicate the region will be especially hard hit.

In Haiti, hunger could more than double, from 700,000 to 1.6 million. Hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants living in the Andes as well as those in Central American countries reeling from a severe drought are also expected to see levels multiply.

The impact of such a sharp rise in hunger could have far-reaching implications ranging from higher levels of chronic childhood malnutrition to security issues. The WFP is calling on nations to expand their social safety net to those who traditionally don't qualify for aid. Many governments and international organizations have been stepping up, providing cash transfers and food deliveries, but are facing logistical and economic hurdles.

Local activists like Cristian Perea in Cali, Colombia, said government efforts are reaching only a fraction of those who need assistance. He recently went out delivering boxes of fruit, rice, vegetables and sugar to families who have gotten nothing and came across one 9-year-old boy who had only consumed a glass of water in the last day.

"You could tell he was in need," Perea said.

Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to see a 5.3% economic contraction this year, possibly a sharper drop than during the Great Depression. That downturn comes after seven years of low growth averaging less than 0.5%.

"We could enter another lost decade," said Alicia Bárcena, chief of the U.N.'s regional economic branch, referring to a previous downturn during the 1980s that took Latin America 25 years in order to recover 1979 per-capita income levels.

Latin America's economies are in a bind, not able to borrow as freely as their European counterparts, making painful budget cuts, slashing jobs, shuttering embassies and putting state employees on part-time working schedules.

"Latin American governments hardly have the resources to finance their current levels of spending," said

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 43 of 66

Sergio Guzmán, director of Colombia Risk Analysis.

Alimenta la Solidaridad, a charity that operates 214 soup kitchens across Venezuela, has seen demand increase since a nationwide quarantine went into effect in mid-March. The group usually serves 14,500 meals to children daily; now an additional 5,300 boys and girls are on a waiting list hoping to get food, but supplies are limited.

"The situation pains me greatly," said Roberto Patiño, the organization's director.

Across the region, nearly 30 million more people are expected to find themselves in "situations of poverty" and another 16 million among the extreme poor, the U.N. estimates.

The new poor include people like Yadira Montenegro, 38, a mother of three in Bogota who recently lost her job as a security guard and now eats just once a day. Her meals usually consist of potato soup or rice with a fried egg on top.

She has not been able to pay the family's \$173 rent or two months now. She said everyone in her family got a \$13 cash transfer, but it didn't last long.

In Haiti, Lebien said he feels rudderless unable to provide for his family, especially when his two daughters tell him they are hungry.

"We are going to starve from this disease," he said.

Trump threatens Twitter over fact checks: What's next?

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer**

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Twitter has taken the unprecedented step of adding fact-check warnings to two of President Donald Trump's tweets that falsely called mail-in ballots "substantially fraudulent" and predicted a "Rigged Election." On Wednesday, the president threatened to impose new regulation on social media companies or even to "close them down."

But Twitter's move and Trump's reaction raise a host of questions, including why Twitter acted now, how it decides when to use such warnings and what its newly assumed role means for the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

QUESTION: Twitter has resisted taking action on Trump's tweets for years, despite the president's history of spreading misinformation and abuse on the platform. What changed?

ANSWER: Trump has pushed Twitter's boundaries for years, using it to attack rivals, speak to his base and simply vent. Until Tuesday, he had never faced sanctions — though other world leaders had.

But things started to change earlier this year when coronavirus misinformation began to spread. Twitter began flagging tweets that spread disputed or misleading claims about the virus with "get the facts" links to more information, including news stories and fact checks.

Twitter said it would be adding such warnings to other tweets that could confuse users. Tweets deemed "harmful" would be removed altogether. Trump's vote-by-mail tweets were the first non-pandemic ones Twitter flagged this way.

Those tweets met specific Twitter criteria for misinformation on certain topics, including the coronavirus, how to vote in elections and the census. There is no such policy for other topics. Earlier Trump tweets about Joe Scarborough, which baselessly suggested the television host and former GOP congressman had committed murder 20 years ago, didn't fall into a specific misinformation category, which is likely why they remain untouched.

Twitter's action is "indicative the public outcry reached such a fever pitch that the company feels like it has to take action," said Jennifer Grygiel, a communications professor at Syracuse University who uses they/them pronouns. It's a "sign that Twitter fears public opinion more than the president who cries wolf too often," they added.

QUESTION: Could Trump make good on his threats to regulate or even shut down social media companies? Could Congress or the Federal Communications Commission help him do this?

ANSWER: It's highly unlikely.

Jack Balkin, a Yale University law professor and First Amendment expert, said any attempt to regulate

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 44 of 66

social media companies for the content on their site would likely need congressional input and approval — and would almost certainly face strong legal challenges. The FCC, meanwhile, has no jurisdiction over internet companies like Twitter.

What is clear, Balkin said, is the limit on Trump's authority to impose his own rules. While the president could ask for an investigation or issue some type of executive order, he can't override laws written by Congress and rooted in the constitution. But that's not the point, he said.

"This is an attempt by the president to, as we used to say in basketball, work the refs," Balkin said. "He's threatening and cajoling with the idea that these folks in their corporate board rooms will think twice about what they're doing."

Former federal judge Michael McConnell, who now directs Stanford Law School's Constitutional Law Center, also said Trump lacks the legal power to back up his threat. "He has no such authority," he said in an email. "He is just venting."

QUESTION: Trump posted the same claim about mail-in ballots on Facebook Tuesday, but the company has taken no action. Does Twitter's decision raise the stakes for other social media companies?

ANSWER: Not for Facebook, it doesn't.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg said on Wednesday that tech platforms shouldn't be in the business of separating fact from fiction on their platforms.

"We have a different policy, I think, than Twitter on this, I just believe strongly that Facebook shouldn't be the arbiter of truth of everything that people say online," Zuckerberg said in a Fox News interview that aired Wednesday. "In general, private companies — especially these platform companies — shouldn't be in the position of doing that."

Facebook has long resisted directly fact-checking politicians, including the ads they run on its site. The company has a policy against voter interference that includes misrepresenting "the dates, locations, times and methods for voting" among other things, but it hasn't applied these rules to Trump's post.

And Facebook, which works with news outlets including The Associated Press to fact check claims on its site, does not allow fact checks to be directly attached to Facebook posts by Trump or other politicians.

However, Facebook and Twitter share similar policies around voting misinformation, including bans around posts that mislead about how or where to vote. Also, Facebook reduces the circulation of social media posts if they are rated false by any of the dozens of news outlets it partners with to fact check claims on its site.

QUESTION: How does Twitter decide which tweets get flagged with the warnings? What happens to the tweets?

ANSWER: Trump's tweets got flagged after someone reported them. That could happen to anyone, but Twitter emphasizes that it can't police every tweet. The company does make its own decision on the matter, unlike Facebook, which outsources such work to outside fact-checkers.

Tweets flagged this way are not demoted, hidden or "silenced" in any way, Twitter said.

Lisa Fazio, a psychology professor and misinformation expert at Vanderbilt University, said the fact-check link is "problematic" because it doesn't directly dispute false information in the tweets. On its own, she said, "get the facts" could mean the president is right, and here's the evidence. The refutation is pretty weak."

QUESTION: What does this mean for the 2020 U.S. presidential election?

ANSWER: Twitter says users can expect to see more such flags thrown on misleading tweets about voting. Whether or not Twitter sticks with the practice depends on how much pressure the public and the media keep up, Grygiel said. It's also not clear how effective it will be.

"Some research shown labeling can make some people dig in more and resist it," Grygiel said.

History in the making as House casts proxy votes in pandemic

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was a day for the history books on Capitol Hill: For the first time, House lawmakers voted by proxy, an unprecedented move to avoid the risks of travel to Washington during the pandemic.

To mark Wednesday's history-making moment, House Republicans sued to stop the Democratic major-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 45 of 66

ity's new system, in which absent lawmakers can instruct those present to vote on their behalf.

The House rules change tries to strike a balance between working from home during the coronavirus outbreak and honoring the Constitution's requirement to be "present" and voting. But it's fast becoming a political test on party lines. More than 70 Democrats cast their vote by proxy. Twenty Republicans joined the lawsuit against the move, which House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy of California says is unconstitutional.

"It's a dereliction of duty," McCarthy said.

The House returned to Washington for an abbreviated two-day session as the city remains under stay home orders. The much smaller Senate is on recess after spending much of May in the capital.

Deadlocked over the next big coronavirus relief bill, Congress is shifting its attention to a more modest overhaul of small-business aid in hopes of helping employers reopen shops and survive the pandemic.

But the agenda is in flux. There were no formal talks between congressional leaders on the next phase of the federal coronavirus response. Democrats have pushed a \$3 trillion-plus measure through the House, but negotiations with the GOP-controlled Senate and White House have yet to begin.

"We can't keep propping up the economy forever," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday in Lexington, Kentucky. "The ultimate solution is to begin to get back to normal."

The day showcased the new proxy system. Republicans declined to participate, but dozens of Democrats — many from California and other Western states — submitted formal requests for proxy votes to the House Clerk.

Democrats engineered the rules change, approved earlier this month, that allows a lawmaker to formally ask a colleague to vote on his or her behalf. A single lawmaker can carry 10 votes.

One by one, as voting was underway on the first bill, the Uighur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, some 40 lawmakers rose to announce the proxy votes they represented. They stated each colleague's name and the person's intended vote, and the actions were recorded. Some lawmakers represented up to 10 representatives, though most carried votes from just one or two.

Not even during the Civil War, the Spanish Flu or any other emergency has the House allowed proxy floor votes. Voting dragged for more than an hour, with the House already operating under social-distancing rules that complicated proceedings. Only limited numbers of lawmakers, many wearing masks, are allowed in the House chamber at once to vote. The Uighur sanctions bill was approved and other votes followed.

Republicans, in filing the lawsuit Tuesday, said the new system threatens the legitimacy of House-passed bills, calling into question whether they will stand the constitutional test. They want to set an example by returning to work as Trump encourages businesses to reopen.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., called the lawsuit a "sad stunt." The nation's virus-related death toll reached 100,000 Wednesday.

Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of the law school at the University of California, Berkeley, expects the suit to be dismissed. He said the Constitution allows the House to make its own rules, and federal courts generally don't get involved with the internal governance of another branch of government.

"Most of all," he wrote by email, the suit "ignores the extraordinary circumstances and the reasons why this is needed to allow the House to do its business and still be safe for members and staff."

It appears the House could be out of session for much of June as well. Under the new rules, proxy voting is allowed only under emergency conditions, for 45 days at a time.

Congress is at a crossroads on the next virus relief bill. Democrats tout their 1,800-page bill as an opening salvo in negotiations, but Senate Republicans are wary of another round of negotiations where Democrats and the White House call the shots. Republicans are also split on how much aid to provide state and local governments, as well as other parts of the Democrats' proposal.

Even as they hit "pause" on a larger bill, Republicans are enthusiastic about improving the Paycheck Protection Program, which was established in March under the \$2 trillion coronavirus relief bill and was replenished last month. All told, Congress has provided about \$660 billion for the program.

Bipartisan legislation would give small employers more time to take advantage of federal subsidies for payroll and other costs. It was expected to pass the House this week.

US death toll from coronavirus surges past 100,000 people

By CARLA K. JOHNSON, SUSAN HAIGH and LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — The U.S. surpassed a jarring milestone Wednesday in the coronavirus pandemic: 100,000 deaths.

That number is the best estimate and most assuredly an undercount. But it represents the stark reality that more Americans have died from the virus than from the Vietnam and Korean wars combined.

"It's a striking reminder of how dangerous this virus can be," said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington.

The once-unthinkable toll appears to be just the beginning of untold misery in the months ahead as Las Vegas casinos and Walt Disney World make plans to reopen, crowds of unmasked Americans swarm beaches and public health officials predict a resurgence by fall.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, issued a stern warning after watching video of Memorial Day crowds gathered at a pool party in Missouri.

"We have a situation in which you see that type of crowding with no mask and people interacting. That's not prudent, and that's inviting a situation that could get out of control," he said during an interview Wednesday on CNN. "Don't start leapfrogging some of the recommendations in the guidelines because that's really tempting fate and asking for trouble."

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 5.6 million people and killed over 350,000, with the U.S. having the most confirmed cases and deaths by far, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Europe has recorded about 170,000 deaths, while the U.S. reached more than 100,000 in less than four months.

The true death toll from the virus, which emerged in China late last year and was first reported in the U.S. in January, is widely believed to be significantly higher, with experts saying many victims died of COVID-19 without ever being tested for it.

Early on, President Donald Trump downplayed the severity of the coronavirus, likening it to the flu, and predicted the U.S. wouldn't reach 100,000 deaths.

"I think we'll be substantially under that number," Trump said on April 10. Ten days later, he said, "We're going toward 50- or 60,000 people." Ten days after that: "We're probably heading to 60,000, 70,000."

Critics have said deaths spiked because Trump was slow to respond, but he has contended on Twitter that it could have been 20 times higher without his actions. He has urged states to reopen their economies after months of stay-at-home restrictions.

Las Vegas casinos can welcome tourists again on June 4. SeaWorld and Walt Disney World plan to reopen to limited numbers of tourists in Orlando, Florida, in June and July. And people who have been cooped up indoors began venturing outside in droves, often without practicing social distancing or wearing masks.

Kelly Hove, 79, of Twin Falls, Idaho, an internationally known pianist, died at a nursing home on April 12 of complications from COVID-19 after a long battle with dementia. Her sister-in-law Jan Hove fears that more will die as states start lifting restrictions.

"I think going back too soon is going to cause more deaths, so I'm incredibly concerned," she said. "And I don't think we have adequate leadership. ... It's an absolute joke, from the White House down."

The virus exacted an especially vicious toll on Trump's hometown of New York City and its surrounding suburbs, killing more than 21,000. At the peak, hundreds of people were dying per day in New York City, and hospitals, ambulances and first responders were inundated with patients.

There is no vaccine or treatment for COVID-19, though several emergency treatments are being used after showing some promise in preliminary testing.

Worldwide, about a dozen vaccine candidates are starting to be tested or getting close to it. Health officials have said studies of a potential vaccine might be done by late this year or early next year.

Only half of Americans said they would be willing to get vaccinated if scientists are successful in developing a vaccine, according to a poll released Wednesday from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 47 of 66

For most, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Among the 100,000 fatalities was 74-year-old Michael Ganci of Newington, Connecticut, who died March 21. He was a public school teacher, a grandfather and father of four, and a 4th-degree belt Sensei in Kyokushin karate.

Ganci, who had a compromised immune system, died at a hospital in Hartford three days after showing symptoms. His family was not allowed to be with him and tried to text and talk with him on his cellphone during his final days. His wife of 48 years also tested positive for COVID-19 and had to grieve alone.

For their daughter, 45-year-old Joanna Ganci of Beverly, Massachusetts, the milestone is important to understand the scope of the virus.

"But at the same time, I think the danger of counting, the danger of statistics, is that it just minimizes the human element," she said. "It's like, what number is going to make an impact for people who haven't been touched by it?"

It's not even clear when the coronavirus turned deadly in the United States. Initially, it was believed the first U.S. deaths from the virus were in late February in a Seattle suburb. But by mid-April, it was determined that two people with the coronavirus died in California as many as three weeks earlier.

Comparing countries is tricky, given varying levels of testing and that some coronavirus deaths can be missed. According to figures tracked by Johns Hopkins University, the death rate per 100,000 people is lower in the U.S. than in Italy, France and Spain but higher than in Germany, China, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand and Australia.

"The experience of other countries shows that death at that scale was preventable," said Michaud of the Kaiser Family Foundation. "To some extent, the United States suffers from having a slow start and inconsistent approach. We might have seen a different trajectory if different policies were put into place earlier and more forcefully."

Countries with low death rates suppressed the virus "through lots of testing, contact tracing and policies to support isolation and quarantine of people at risk," Michaud said.

Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, director of ICAP, a global health center at Columbia University, called the U.S. death rate shocking.

"It reflects the fact that we have neglected basic fundamentals for health," El-Sadr said. "So, now we are in this shameful situation. It is the most vulnerable people in our midst — the elderly, the poor, members of racial/ethnic minority groups — who are the ones disproportionately getting sick and dying."

Tennessee to halt sharing COVID-19 patient data

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee will soon stop providing the names and addresses of COVID-19 patients to first responders, after initially arguing that doing so would protect those on the front line.

Gov. Bill Lee's administration decided on the change this week, conceding that the data may have created a false sense of security to those responding to emergency calls. The data sharing will stop at the end of the month.

The announcement follows an Associated Press review that found public officials in at least two-thirds of states are sharing the addresses of people who tested positive with first responders. A small handful of those states, including Tennessee at the time, also shared the patients' names.

Supporters argue that the information is vital to helping them take extra precautions to avoid contracting and spreading the coronavirus. Yet civil liberty and community activists have expressed repeated concerns of potential profiling in African American and Hispanic communities that already have an uneasy relationship with law enforcement.

"Individuals who have COVID-19 but who have not sought testing because they do not have symptoms may unintentionally transmit the virus to your personnel because the need to wear appropriate PPE was

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 48 of 66

not apparent," wrote Todd Skelton, legal counsel for Lee's coronavirus task force, in a Tuesday email. "Therefore, first responders and law enforcement are encouraged to treat all close interactions with individuals with appropriate precautions."

Skelton added that personal protection equipment is now "more readily attainable" for first responders. In his email, Skelton noted that more than 1.4 million PPE items had been shipped to law enforcement and others across the state.

Earlier this year, the Department of Health had originally declined to hand over the COVID-19 patient data, warning that wearing protective equipment only in those cases of confirmed illness is unlikely to guarantee their protection.

That decision was eventually overturned by the governor's office after law enforcement reached out to his office pleading it was needed to stay safe.

Lee later told reporters that the patient data sharing policy would be temporary and could change when more information and protection equipment became available.

Sharing the information does not violate medical privacy laws, according to guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. But it hasn't stopped concerns about how the information was being used.

The American Civil Liberties Union, Tennessee Black Caucus and others had all called for a stop to the sharing of data with law enforcement.

At least eight states are continuing to share patient names with law enforcement: Iowa, Louisiana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota. Wisconsin did so briefly but stopped earlier this month.

Colorado officials also confirmed on Wednesday that local health departments had stopped sharing names and addresses with law enforcement because the community transmission of COVID-19 had become so widespread.

Colorado has had more than 25,000 positive cases and more than 1,100 deaths linked to the virus.

In Kansas, Republican lawmakers had included a section in a sweeping coronavirus bill that would ensure COVID-19 patient names, addresses and other relevant information would be provided to first responders and 911 call centers.

The bill was vetoed by Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly on Tuesday.

Kelly did not refer to this provision in her veto message, and lawmakers did not discuss it during House and Senate debates. However, during a caucus for GOP senators, Sen. Molly Baumgardner, a Kansas City-area Republican, defended it as necessary for protecting first responders.

The state is one of the few that had not shared patient data with first responders.

In Tennessee, law enforcement officials have been instructed to "delete and/or shred" the patient data provided by the state within 30 days, according to Skelton's email.

"Also, you must immediately notify Health if the (protected health information) in your possession has been, or is suspected of having been, disclosed in an unauthorized manner, regardless of when the disclosure occurred," he said.

Biden accuser's credentials, expert testimony under scrutiny

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — State prosecutors in California are investigating the credentials that Tara Reade, the former Senate staffer who has accused Joe Biden of assaulting her in 1993, attested to in as many as 20 criminal trials, including an attempted murder case where her testimony was deemed "critical."

The Monterey County District Attorney's office said it never tried to verify the credentials on her resume before using her as a paid expert witness on domestic violence issues. Reade, who went by Alexandra Tara McCabe, made several claims on her resume and in court that have now come into question.

Reade said she had a bachelor's degree from Antioch University, which the school denies. She said she worked in Biden's office from 1991 to 1994, while Senate records show her there from December 1992 to

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 49 of 66

August 1993. And she said she served as legislative aide for Biden while he worked on the Violence Against Women Act, while witnesses and records describe her holding a more junior role, sometimes supervising interns or handling mail.

"We are investigating whether Ms. McCabe gave false testimony under oath," Chief Assistant District Attorney Berkley Brannon of Monterey County said Wednesday.

"At the time, we did not contact the schools she said she attended to see if they would disclose her records. We did not require that she provide proof of all the extensive professional training and experience listed on her CV (curriculum vitae)," Brannon told The Associated Press in an email.

Defense lawyers are also investigating her testimony, hoping to glean the extent of her work through county payment records. Brannon said it was not yet clear how often she gave expert testimony.

Reade, testifying in December 2018, said: "I was just doing the math. It's been over 20 times." A month later, before the same judge and prosecutor, she said the number was "I think at least 10."

Defense lawyers could seek to have their clients' convictions overturned in some or all of those cases, depending on the weight of the other evidence. The statute of limitations for perjury in California is three years, they said.

In the December 2018 case, Reade's testimony helped send Jennifer Vasquez and Victoria Ramirez to prison for seven years to life in an arson and attempted murder case. The victim, a man, had been in a volatile relationship with Vasquez. He initially told police he saw two women running from the scene, but days later recanted, saying he had instead seen two men, defense lawyers said.

"She comes to court and says he's probably lying (the second time) because it was a domestic violence situation," said Roland Soltész, who represented Ramirez. "When she started testifying, she immediately started talking about Joe Biden and the Violence Against Women Act. To me, that actually made her sound credible to the jury."

A month later, after James Sloop, 41, was convicted of holding his ex-girlfriend against her will, prosecutors sent out a press release that said McCabe, "a domestic violence expert, provided critical testimony which aided the jury's understanding as to why victims of domestic violence recant, minimize, and frequently stay in abusive relationships."

Sloop is appealing the conviction, which led to a 17-year sentence on a firearm charge and other charges. In both trials, the defense lawyers questioned Reade about her education and experience.

"Well, I worked originally for former U.S. Senator Joseph Biden as a legislative aide. He worked on the Violence Against Women Act. He was one of the sponsors," Reade testified at Sloop's trial.

"Do you have an undergraduate degree?"

"Antioch University," she replied, according to the transcript, which the AP obtained.

Reade this month has continued to challenge Antioch's statement that she never finished a degree program there. However, she has not been able to produce any documentation. She did complete a law degree from the Seattle University in 2004, but said she never became licensed to practice law.

Reade, 56, changed her name to Alexandra McCabe after fleeing an abusive husband in 1996. She later returned to using Reade. Her career experience includes several stints working with domestic violence organizations, along with work with animal rescue groups.

"I have reached out to the DA and I am ready to assist anyway that is needed," Reade said Wednesday.

Reade earlier this year said that Biden digitally penetrated her and groped her in the basement of a Capitol Hill office building in spring 1993. Biden has vehemently denied her claims, and current and former Biden staffers say they cannot recall such an incident. Last week, as questions about her California court testimony emerged, prominent #MeToo lawyer Douglas Wigdor dropped Reade as a client.

Philadelphia defense lawyer Alan Tauber, who has worked on exoneration cases, said questions about an expert's qualifications can be "enough to stain a case."

"The assumption is if you have an expert here, they've been vetted," said Tauber, now the city's first assistant public defender. "If you were to find one dishonest thing in her credentials, the entire house of cards falls."

Victim in police encounter had started new life in Minnesota

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

Before he died after being pinned for minutes beneath a Minneapolis police officer's knee, George Floyd was suffering the same fate as millions of Americans during the coronavirus pandemic: out of work and looking for a new job.

Floyd moved to Minneapolis from his native Houston several years ago in hopes of finding work and starting a new life, said Christopher Harris, Floyd's lifelong friend. But he lost his job as a bouncer at a restaurant when Minnesota's governor issued a stay-at-home order.

On Monday night, an employee at a Minneapolis grocery store called police after Floyd allegedly tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill.

In widely circulated cellphone video of the subsequent arrest, Floyd, who was black, can be seen on the ground with his hands cuffed behind his back while Officer Derek Chauvin presses him to the pavement with his knee on Floyd's neck. The video shows Chauvin, who is white, holding Floyd down for minutes as Floyd complains he can't breathe. The video ends with paramedics lifting a limp Floyd onto a stretcher and placing him in an ambulance.

Four officers were fired Tuesday; on Wednesday, Mayor Jacob Frey called for Chauvin to be criminally charged. Frey made no mention of the other three officers, who were also at the scene.

Police say Floyd was resisting arrest, but Chauvin's lawyer has declined to comment and the other officers have not been publicly identified.

Floyd, 46, grew up in Houston's Third Ward, one of the city's predominantly black neighborhoods, where he and Harris met in middle school. At 6 feet, 6 inches, Floyd emerged as a star tight end for Jack Yates High School and played in the 1992 state championship game in the Houston Astrodome. Yates lost to Temple, 38-20.

Donnell Cooper, one of Floyd's former classmates, said he remembered watching Floyd score touchdowns. Floyd towered over everyone and earned the nickname "gentle giant."

"Quiet personality but a beautiful spirit," Cooper said. His death "definitely caught me by surprise. It's just so sad, the world we're living in now."

Floyd was charged in 2007 with armed robbery in a home invasion in Houston and in 2009 was sentenced to five years in prison as part of a plea deal, according to court documents.

Harris, Floyd's childhood friend, said he and some of their mutual friends had moved to Minneapolis in search of jobs around 2014. Harris said he talked Floyd into moving there as well after he got out of prison.

"He was looking to start over fresh, a new beginning," Harris said. "He was happy with the change he was making."

Floyd landed a job working security at a Salvation Army store in downtown Minneapolis. He later started working two jobs, one driving trucks and another as a bouncer at Conga Latin Bistro, where he was known as "Big Floyd."

"Always cheerful," Giovanni Tunstrom, the bistro's owner, said. "He had a good attitude. He would dance badly to make people laugh. I tried to teach him how to dance because he loved Latin music, but I couldn't because he was too tall for me. He always called me 'Bossman.' I said, 'Floyd, don't call me Bossman. I'm your friend.'"

Harris said Floyd was laid off when Minnesota shut down restaurants as part of a stay-at-home order. He said he spoke with Floyd on Sunday night and gave him some information for contacting a temporary jobs agency.

"He was doing whatever it takes to maintain going forward with his life," Harris said, adding he couldn't believe that Floyd would resort to forgery. "I've never known him to do anything like that."

Floyd leaves behind a 6-year-old daughter who still lives in Houston with her mother, Roxie Washington, the Houston Chronicle reported. Efforts to reach Washington on Wednesday were unsuccessful.

"The way he died was senseless," Harris said. "He begged for his life. He pleaded for his life. When you

try so hard to put faith in this system, a system that you know isn't designed for you, when you constantly seek justice by lawful means and you can't get it, you begin to take the law into your own hands."

Keselowski looks to heat up market with 2nd Charlotte win

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

CONCORD, N.C. (AP) — The caution that sent the Coca-Cola 600 to overtime both continued Chase Elliott's bad week and gave Brad Keselowski a much-needed break.

Keselowski is in a contract year during a season disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. Business was closed for 10 weeks, meaning zero movement between Keselowski and Team Penske.

The first driver to give Roger Penske a NASCAR championship — first in the Xfinity Series and then, finally, in 2012, a Cup title — has been idling all year. Then a caution with two laps remaining at Charlotte Motor Speedway cluttered Elliott's clear path to the win and gave Keselowski an opening.

Elliott pitted and Keselowski's new crew chief Jeremy Bullins called for his driver to stay on track, cycle into the lead and try to out-muscle seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson in a two-lap overtime sprint to the finish.

"We just committed to taking the front row and take a shot at the restart," Bullins said. "Not many people I'd rather have in that situation than Brad."

Keselowski got a terrific launch, cleared Johnson and pulled away for the Memorial Day victory. Indianapolis 500 victories by Will Power and Simon Pagenaud in 2018 and 2019, paired with Keselowski's steal in the 600, gave Penske three consecutive Memorial Day weekend wins.

Now Keselowski returns to Charlotte Motor Speedway for a Wednesday night race and a shot at consecutive victories. Kevin Harvick, Denny Hamlin and then Keselowski have won the three Cup races since the season resumed.

Bullins is bringing a new Ford built by Team Penske. This is a big stretch for the No. 2 team to prove it should remain intact beyond this season. The financial losses during the pandemic will likely cause yet another driver salary reset and Keselowski, the only Cup champion available, is probably at the highest end of free agent salaries.

Roger Penske said the pandemic has prevented any meetings with Keselowski.

Keselowski believes he and Bullins are settling in well after four races to start the season, the shutdown, and now four races in 11 days. Bullins previously worked with Keselowski in the Xfinity Series and said the foundation is strong.

"There's always been a good trust and good relationship with him," Bullins said. "I know where he's coming from. I feel like we understand each other well. We've always worked together well. It was kind of like we hit the ground running again.

"It took a couple races to figure out the feel that he needed in the cars, what we needed to do better for him. I feel like we've been getting a lot closer with that every week."

A look at other hot topics headed into Wednesday night at Charlotte:

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR ELLIOTT

Sooner or later, Elliott is going to get a break based solely on the way his Hendrick Motorsports team is performing.

Elliott was crashed by Kyle Busch on the final lap of last Wednesday night's rain-shortened race at Darlington Raceway as he tried to seize the lead. Then he had the Coca-Cola 600 wrapped up until teammate William Byron brought out a caution with two laps remaining.

Even though the leader all night clearly benefited from clean air, Elliott not only pitted from the lead but took four tires for a lengthier pit stop. It dropped him to 11th on the restart with just two laps remaining and he worked his way to third. He was later scored second when teammate Johnson was disqualified because his car failed post-race inspection.

Elliott was terse after his second defeat in four days.

"You just make the best decision you can based on the information you have," Elliott said. "When you

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 52 of 66

are leading the race like that, people behind you are going to do the exact opposite of what you do. That was the situation we were put in."

Both Keselowski and Busch could empathize with Elliott's heartbreak at Charlotte. Keselowski spoke with Elliott as the two switched spots in front of a laptop during the post-race Zoom media availability. Busch went to Elliott's car on pit road immediately after the race.

"I felt bad for him," Busch said. "He's taken it a heck of a lot better than I ever have. I certainly was never very good at disappointing races. He's doing good and (I) just told him to keep going forward and go get the next one."

Elliott and his Hendrick Motorsports team have been very strong through the first three races back. Elliott finished fourth at the first Darlington race, then was in position to win the next two races. Teammates Byron, Johnson and Alex Bowman have also fared well, showing the organization was well-prepared after the shutdown.

But Elliott's team has been the most consistent late in races and Wednesday brings another chance for the driver to finally get his first win of the season.

HAMLIN TAKES A HIT

Hamlin, winner last Wednesday night at Darlington, returns to Charlotte with three new crew members after a costly penalty to the Joe Gibbs Racing team. Tungsten fell off Hamlin's car on a pace lap before the Coca-Cola 600, an infraction that draws an automatic four-race suspension for the crew chief, car chief and engineer.

The replacement crew will be thrown into the fire. These return races are done in one-day shows without practice and qualifying was only held for the Coca-Cola 600. Wednesday night's race is just 310 miles, a breeze compared to Sunday night when overtime pushed the race to 607.5 miles, the longest in NASCAR history.

"Obviously, you've got a shorter distance to accomplish what you need," Hamlin said. "Tire and fuel mileage strategy will be different, and we'll have shorter stages to work within. This one will be more of a sprint than a marathon."

'Bummed out': SpaceX launch scrubbed because of bad weather

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The launch of a SpaceX rocket ship with two NASA astronauts on a history-making flight into orbit was called off with less than 17 minutes to go in the countdown Wednesday because of thunderclouds and the risk of lightning.

Liftoff was rescheduled for Saturday afternoon.

The spacecraft — designed, built and owned by SpaceX — was set to blast off in the afternoon for the International Space Station, opening a new era in commercial spaceflight. It would have also marked the first time in nearly a decade that the U.S. launched astronauts into orbit from American soil.

But thunderstorms for much of the day threatened to force a postponement, and the word finally came down that the atmosphere was so electrically charged that the spacecraft was in danger of getting hit by lightning.

NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said the agency and SpaceX worked together to "make the right decision" and put safety first at a time when some were wondering whether the public attention surrounding the flight would create undue pressure to launch.

Veteran space shuttle astronauts Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken were supposed to ride into orbit aboard SpaceX's sleek, white-and-black, bullet-shaped Dragon capsule on top of a Falcon 9 rocket, taking off from the same launch pad used during the Apollo moon missions a half-century ago.

Both President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence had arrived to watch. Trump, who before the postponement marveled at the "magnificent" rocket on the pad, later tweeted that he will return to Florida for the next try, and the vice president did the same.

"Thank you to @NASA and @SpaceX for their hard work and leadership. Look forward to being back

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 53 of 66

with you on Saturday!" Trump said.

The flight — the long-held dream of SpaceX founder Elon Musk — would have marked the first time a private company sent humans into orbit.

It would have also ended a launch drought for NASA. Ever since the space shuttle was retired in 2011, NASA has relied on Russian spaceships launched from Kazakhstan to take U.S. astronauts to and from the space station.

During the day, the rumble of thunder could be heard as the astronauts made their way to the pad at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, and a tornado warning was issued moments after they climbed into their capsule.

"We could see some raindrops on the windows and just figured that whatever it was, was too close to the launch pad at the time we needed it not to be," Hurley, the spacecraft commander, said after the flight was scrubbed. "Understand that everybody's probably a little bit bummed out. That's just part of the deal. ... We'll do it again, I think, on Saturday."

"Appreciate your resilience sitting there in the vehicle," a controller replied.

Behnken responded: "Nothing better than being prime crew on a new spaceship."

The astronauts had to remain strapped in their seats until all the fuel in their rocket was unloaded and the emergency escape system was disarmed.

The launch preparations took place in the shadow of the coronavirus outbreak that has killed an estimated 100,000 Americans.

With this mission, "everybody can look up and say, 'Look, the future is so much brighter than the present.' And I really hope that this is an inspiration to the world," Bridenstine said.

The flight would put Musk and SpaceX in the same league as only three spacefaring countries — Russia, the U.S. and China, all of which have sent astronauts into orbit.

"What today is about is reigniting the dream of space and getting people fired up about the future," Musk said in a NASA interview before the postponement.

A solemn-sounding Musk said he felt his responsibilities most heavily when he saw the astronauts' wives and young sons just before the launch attempt. He said he told them: "We've done everything we can to make sure your dads come back OK."

NASA pushed ahead with the preparations despite the viral outbreak but kept the guest list at Kennedy extremely limited and asked spectators to stay at home. Still, thousands jammed area bridges and beaches to watch, many of them not wearing masks or observing the 6-foot social distancing rules.

The space agency also estimated 1.7 million people were watching the launch preparations online.

Among the spectators was Erin Gatz, who came prepared for both rain and pandemic. Accompanied by her 14-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son, she brought face masks and a small tent.

She said the children had faint memories of watching in person one of the last shuttle launches almost a decade ago when they were preschoolers.

"I wanted them to see the flip side and get to see the next era of space travel," said Gatz, who lives in Deltona, Florida. "It's exciting and hopeful."

NASA hired SpaceX and Boeing in 2014 to design and build spaceships to carry astronauts to the space station in a new kind of public-private partnership aimed at bringing down costs and spurring innovation. Boeing's capsule, Starliner, is not expected to fly astronauts into space until early 2021.

Ultimately, NASA hopes to rely, in part, on its commercial partners as it works to send astronauts back to the moon in the next few years, and on to Mars in the 2030s.

"We're doing it differently than we've ever done it before," Bridenstine said. "We're transforming how we do spaceflight in the future."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 54 of 66

American virus deaths at 100,000: What does a number mean?

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

The fraught, freighted number of this particular American moment is a round one brimming with zeroes: 100,000. A hundred thousands. A thousand hundreds. Five thousand score. More than 8,000 dozen. All dead.

On Wednesday, the United States' official reported coronavirus death toll reached six digits. One hundred thousand lives wiped out by a disease unknown to science a half a year ago.

And as the unwanted figure arrives — nearly a third of the global death toll in the first five months of a very trying year — what can looking at that one and those five zeroes tell us? What does any number deployed in momentous times to convey scope and seriousness and thought really mean?

"We all want to measure these experiences because they're so shocking, so overwhelming that we want to bring some sense of knowability to the unknown," says Jeffrey Jackson, a history professor at Rhodes College in Tennessee who teaches about the politics of natural disasters.

This is not new. In the mid-1800s, a new level of numerical precision was emerging in Western society around the same time the United States fought the Civil War. Facing such massive death and challenges counting the dead, Americans started to realize that numbers and statistics represented more than knowledge; they contained power, according to historian Drew Gilpin Faust.

"Their provision of seemingly objective knowledge promised a foundation for control in a reality escaping the bounds of the imaginable," Faust wrote in "This Republic of Suffering," her account of how the Civil War changed Americans' relationship with death.

"Numbers," she wrote, "represented a means of imposing sense and order on what Walt Whitman tellingly depicted as the 'countless graves' of the 'infinite dead.'"

Today's Americans have precedents for visualizing and understanding 100,000 people — dead and alive. They have numerous comparisons at hand.

For example: Beaver Stadium, seen often on TV as the home to Penn State football and one of the country's largest sports venues, holds 106,572 people when full. The 2018 estimated population of South Bend, Indiana, was 101,860. About 100,000 people visit the Statue of Liberty every 10 days.

The total amount of U.S. Civil War deaths — combat and otherwise — was 655,000. For World War I it was more than 116,000, for World War II more than 405,000 and for the Korean and Vietnam wars more than 36,000 and more than 58,000 respectively. Those don't include non-U.S. deaths.

Gun violence killed more than 37,000 people a year on average between 2014 and 2018 in the United States. And 9/11 took exactly 2,996 lives, a figure that the U.S. coronavirus tally passed in early April.

At some point with numbers, though, things start feeling more abstract and less comprehensible. This has informed the methodology of remembering the Holocaust by humanizing it: The death of 6 million Jews, after all, among many others, is a figure so enormous that it resists comprehension.

"It's really hard for people to grasp statistics when it comes to numbers after a certain scale," says Lorenzo Servitje, an assistant professor of literature and medicine at Lehigh University.

"Can you picture 30,000 people Or 50,000 people? And when you get into the millions, what do you even do with that?" he says. "It's so outside of our everyday life that it's hard to grasp meaning from them."

The New York Times tried to address that problem Sunday, dedicating its entire front page to naming the virus dead — an exercise that, even in a tiny typeface, only captured 1% of those now gone. "A count," the newspaper said, "reveals only so much."

Adding to the complexity is how different coronavirus deaths are from, say, a 9/11, a mass shooting or a cataclysmic natural disaster. Unlike those, the COVID saga is unfolding gradually over time, growing steadily more severe, and resists the time-tested American appetite for loud and immediate storylines.

"Each day we've become accustomed to the new reality that we don't realize how far we've traveled from what normal is," says Daryl Van Tongeren, an associate professor of psychology at Hope College in Michigan who studies how people find meaning in suffering.

Our brains, he says, are wired to be empathetic to suffering — to a point.

"With too much suffering over time, it's overwhelming and we begin to become callous. And our empathy

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 55 of 66

essentially runs out," Van Tongeren says. "We're so accustomed to death right now, at 100,000, that our empathy has become lower."

Finally, there are numbers living within the round 100,000 number that cry out for their own interpretations. The disproportionate number of dead Americans of color, for example. Or the systematic way the disease is ravaging places where older Americans live, taking them in numbers that — if they were dying in mass shootings — might provoke a very different kind of reaction.

Don't focus so much on the numbers, some admonish. Others criticize official counts, calling them inflated and inaccurate. More likely, because of spotty testing and undiagnosed cases, the number 100,000 falls significantly short.

But regardless of whether 100,000 has already truly happened or is yet to come, the meaning of this numerical milestone — human-imposed though it may be — raises some fundamental questions.

Have we decided to live with death, at least to a point? What would it mean if, around Labor Day, we reconvened in this space to discuss the 200,000th dead American? What would that number cause us to contemplate?

In the 14th century, the Black Death ravaged humanity, taking many millions. No one knows how many died. Today, when the dead are counted, some coherence is reached. The thinking is this: If the virus can't be stopped, at least it can be quantified by human effort — far more palatable than a society where we couldn't even establish who was no longer among us.

"As humans we like clean stories," says Roland Minton, a mathematics professor at Roanoke College in Virginia. "And classifying things by number of digits can be a nice, clear way of classifying things."

So when Whitman wrote of "countless graves," he was not merely being poetic. Then, the idea of uncounted dead was more than metaphor; it was a direct description of what had happened.

Replacing that situation with accurate numbers, as society grew more sophisticated, did not solve everything. But it was something. Just as 100,000 means something this week in American life. Maybe not everything — not a vaccine, not a treatment — and maybe not clarity, exactly. Not yet. But something.

Larry Kramer used voice, pen to raise consciousness on AIDS

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Time never softened the urgency of Larry Kramer's demands.

Theatergoers leaving a celebrated revival of Kramer's "The Normal Heart" in 2011 were greeted by the playwright himself, deep in his 70s by then, handing out leaflets outside the Broadway theater demanding they do more to stop AIDS.

"Please know that AIDS is a worldwide plague. Please know there is no cure," the leaflets read.

That same year, Kramer found time to help the American Foundation for Equal Rights mount their play "8" on Broadway about the legal battle over same-sex marriage in California. "I don't believe much acting is required other than being fervent and I'm pretty good at that," he joked to The Associated Press.

Kramer, whose angry voice and pen raised consciousness about AIDS and roused thousands to action, died Wednesday at 84. His art was often as blunt as his anger, but his dedication was unwavering.

"There's so many things I still want to do and there are so many fights still to win. I try to concentrate on that," he said. "The fight's never over."

One of his last projects was the two-volume "The American People," which chronicled the history of gay people in America. It took him decades to write. "I just think it's so important that we know our history — the history of how badly we're treated and how hard we have to fight to get what we deserve, which is equality," he said.

Kramer founded the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, or ACT UP, lost his lover to acquired immune deficiency syndrome in 1984 and was himself infected with the virus that causes it. He also suffered from hepatitis B, and in 2001, received a liver transplant.

"The one nice thing that I seem to have acquired, accidentally, is this reputation of everyone afraid of my voice," he told The AP in 2015. "So I get heard, whether it changes anything or not."

He was nominated for an Academy Award for his screenplay for "Women in Love," the 1969 adaptation

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 56 of 66

of D.H. Lawrence's novel. It starred Glenda Jackson, who won her first Oscar for her performance.

He also wrote the 1972 screenplay "Lost Horizon," a novel, "Faggots," and the plays "Sissies' Scrapbook," "The Furniture of Home," "Just Say No" and "The Destiny of Me," which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1993. At the 2013 Tonys, he was honored with the Isabelle Stevenson Award, given for philanthropic or civic efforts.

"We have lost a giant of a man who stood up for gay rights like a warrior," said Elton John in a statement. Author and activist Dan Savage added: "He ordered us to love ourselves and each other and to fight for our lives. He was a hero."

Kramer was as known for his public fight to secure medical treatment, acceptance and civil rights for people with AIDS as he was for his creative writing. He also battled — and later reconciled — with Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who has been leading the national response to the coronavirus pandemic.

"This is a very, very sad day. It's the passing of a true icon," Fauci told The Associated Press, saying he was glad that he'd recently had a chance for a last phone call with Kramer.

"I had a very long and complicated and ultimately wonderful relationship with him over more than three decades," Fauci said. "We went from adversaries to acquaintances to friends to really, really dear friends."

In 1981, when AIDS had not yet acquired its name and only a few dozen people had been diagnosed with it, Kramer and a group of his friends in New York City founded Gay Men's Health Crisis, one of the first groups in the country to address the epidemic.

He roused the gay community with speeches and articles such as "1,112 and Counting," published in gay newspapers in 1983. "Our continued existence as gay men upon the face of this earth is at stake," he wrote. "Unless we fight for our lives, we shall die."

The late journalist Randy Shilts, in his account of the AIDS epidemic "And the Band Played On," called that article "inarguably one of the most influential works of advocacy journalism of the decade" and credited it with "crystallizing the epidemic into a political movement for the gay community."

Kramer split with GMHC in 1983 after other board members decided to concentrate on providing support services to people with AIDS.

After leaving GMHC, Kramer gave voice to his grief and frustration by writing "The Normal Heart," in which a furious young writer — not unlike Kramer himself — battles politicians, society, the media and other gay leaders to bring attention to the crisis.

The play premiered at The Public Theater in 1985. Associated Press drama critic Michael Kuchwara called it an "angry but compelling indictment of a society as well as a subculture for failing to respond adequately to the tragedy."

A revival in 2011 earned the best revival Tony, and two actors from it — Ellen Barkin and John Benjamin Hickey — also won Tonys. The play was turned into a TV film for HBO in 2014 starring Mark Ruffalo, Matt Bomer, Jim Parsons and Julia Roberts. It won the Emmy for best movie.

His 1992 play "The Destiny of Me," continues the story of Weeks from "The Normal Heart." Weeks, in the hospital for an experimental AIDS treatment, reflects on the past, particularly his relationship with his family. His parents and brother appear to act out what happened in the past, as does the young Ned, who confronts his older self.

In 1987, Kramer founded ACT UP, which became famous for staging civil disobedience at places like the Food and Drug Administration, the New York Stock Exchange and Burroughs-Wellcome Corp., the maker of the chief anti-AIDS drug, AZT.

ACT UP's protests helped persuade the FDA to speed the approval of new drugs and Burroughs-Wellcome to lower its price for AZT.

"I was one of the many frightened kids that joined ACT UP hoping to push back death. He called us his kids, and, for me, he became a mentor and father figure," said Peter Staley, a longtime HIV/AIDS activist in New York City. "Within three years, the AIDS research budget at the NIH hit \$1 billion a year. It was a movement that caused that sudden shift. Larry was its spark. I know I owe my life to him, and millions

more can say the same.”

Kramer soon relinquished a leadership role in ACT UP. As support for AIDS research increased, he found some common ground with health officials whom ACT UP had criticized.

“Larry Kramer could best be described as a force of nature, like a hurricane. If you were in his way, you didn’t want to be in his path,” said Dr. Jack Drescher, a New York City psychiatrist.

At the time of his death, Kramer was working on a play called “An Army of Lovers,” which he was updating to include the pandemic.

In July 2013, Kramer married his longtime partner, architect David Webster, in the intensive care unit of NYU Langone Medical Center, where Kramer had been recovering from surgery for a bowel obstruction. He had set up wedding plans before his health emergency and wouldn’t let that stop him.

Loved ones reunite at an oasis on closed US-Canada border

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

BLAINE, Wash. (AP) — Alec de Rham sat with his back against a stone obelisk marked “International Boundary” as he and his wife visited with a daughter they hadn’t seen in 10 weeks.

Hannah Smith took a bus and a bicycle from Vancouver, British Columbia, to the border to meet her “main person,” Jabree Robinson, of Bellingham, Washington.

And beside a large, white arch symbolizing U.S.-Canadian friendship, Lois England and Ian Hendon kissed giddily, reunited for a few hours after the longest separation of their three-year relationship.

Families, couples and friends — separated for weeks by the pandemic-fueled closing of the border between the U.S. and Canada — are flocking to Peace Arch Park, an oasis on the border where they can reunite, and touch, and hug.

The park covers 42 acres (17 hectares) of manicured lawn, flower beds, and cedar and alder trees, extending from Blaine, Washington, into Surrey, British Columbia, at the far western end of the 3,987-mile (6,446-km) contiguous border. As long as they stay in the park, visitors can freely roam from the U.S. to the Canadian side, and vice versa, without showing so much as a passport.

It’s a frequent site of picnics and sometimes weddings, not to mention an area for travelers to stretch their legs when holiday traffic clogs the ports of entry. And for now it’s one of just a few areas along the along the entire border where those separated by the closure can meet.

Officials closed the park in mid-March over coronavirus concerns. The U.S. side reopened early this month, as Washington Gov. Jay Inslee eased some of the restrictions in his stay-home order, and the Canadian side reopened two weeks ago. England, of Sumas, Washington, said she cried when Hendon called to give her the news and they quickly made plans to meet.

England said she and Hendon have generally been careful about social distancing, but there was no thought of keeping 6 feet apart when they saw each other.

“I was really getting depressed over it — this was a huge reprieve,” she said.

It typically takes 40 minutes for England to get to Hendon’s home in Surrey, and they have usually seen each other at least once a week since they met online three years ago. Hendon, an electrician, has kept busy with work during the pandemic, while England has spent time with her daughter and her mother, who live nearby.

The couple chat by Skype almost every morning, but England missed Hendon so badly a few weeks ago that she tried to enter Canada as an “essential” visitor — a category reserved for medical workers, airline crews or truckers hauling crucial goods. Canadian guards turned her away.

One reunion was not enough. The next day, they returned with a barbecue and steaks.

About a half-hour drive to the east, other families met where roads on either side closely parallel a small ditch marking the border. Visitors set up chairs across from each other and had long chats; there’s less freedom to touch there.

Before they tried it, Tim and Kris Browning thought it might be too hard to see each other without touching. Kris lives north of the border in Abbotsford, where she is a hospital cook, and Tim lives just south,

where he works as an electrician for a berry grower. They married in 2014 after meeting online; the virus has delayed Tim's application to move to Canada.

But chatting across the ditch and a rusty guard rail, or in a nearby raspberry field owned by Tim's employer, has become a weekly highlight — much better than a device, they said.

"It's been really heartwarming to see all the families out, and everyone's been so nice," said Tim, who usually spends three days a week with Kris and her two children in Canada. "One Border Patrol agent came by and said, 'Why aren't you hugging your wife? Go on, hug your wife!'"

AP-NORC poll: Half of Americans would get a COVID-19 vaccine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

Only about half of Americans say they would get a COVID-19 vaccine if the scientists working furiously to create one succeed, a number that's surprisingly low considering the effort going into the global race for a vaccine.

But more people might eventually roll up their sleeves: The new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found 31% simply weren't sure if they'd get vaccinated. Another 1 in 5 said they'd refuse.

Health experts already worry about the whiplash if vaccine promises like President Donald Trump's goal of a 300 million-dose stockpile by January fail. Only time and science will tell -- and the new poll shows the public is indeed skeptical.

"It's always better to under-promise and over-deliver," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

"The unexpected looms large and that's why I think for any of these vaccines, we're going to need a large safety database to provide the reassurance," he added.

Among Americans who say they wouldn't get vaccinated, 7 in 10 worry about safety.

"I am not an anti-vaxxer," said Melanie Dries, 56, of Colorado Springs, Colorado. But, "to get a COVID-19 vaccine within a year or two ... causes me to fear that it won't be widely tested as to side effects."

Dr. Francis Collins, who directs the National Institutes of Health, insists safety is the top priority. The NIH is creating a master plan for testing the leading COVID-19 vaccine candidates in tens of thousands of people, to prove if they really work and also if they're safe.

"I would not want people to think that we're cutting corners because that would be a big mistake. I think this is an effort to try to achieve efficiencies, but not to sacrifice rigor," Collins told the AP earlier this month.

"Definitely the worst thing that could happen is if we rush through a vaccine that turns out to have significant side effects," Collins added.

Among those who want a vaccine, the AP-NORC poll found protecting themselves, their family and the community are the top reasons.

"I'm definitely going to get it," said Brandon Grimes, 35, of Austin, Texas. "As a father who takes care of his family, I think ... it's important for me to get vaccinated as soon as it's available to better protect my family."

And about 7 in 10 of those who would get vaccinated say life won't go back to normal without a vaccine. A site foreman for his family's construction business, Grimes travels from house to house interacting with different crews, and said some of his coworkers also are looking forward to vaccination to minimize on-the-job risk.

The new coronavirus is most dangerous to older adults and people of any age who have chronic health problems such as diabetes or heart disease. The poll found 67% of people 60 and older say they'd get vaccinated, compared with 40% who are younger.

And death counts suggest black and Hispanic Americans are more vulnerable to COVID-19, because of unequal access to health care and other factors. Yet the poll found just 25% of African Americans and 37% of Hispanics would get a vaccine compared to 56% of whites.

Among people who don't want a vaccine, about 4 in 10 say they're concerned about catching COVID-19

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 59 of 66

from the shot. But most of the leading vaccine candidates don't contain the coronavirus itself, meaning they can't cause infection.

And 3 in 10 who don't want a vaccine don't fear getting seriously ill from the coronavirus.

Over 5.5 million people worldwide have been confirmed infected by the virus, and more than 340,000 deaths have been recorded, including nearly 100,000 in the U.S., according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. Experts believe the true toll is significantly higher.

And while most people who get COVID-19 have mild cases and recover, doctors still are discovering the coronavirus attacks in far sneakier ways than just causing pneumonia — from blood clots to heart and kidney damage to the latest scare, a life-threatening inflammatory reaction in children.

Whatever the final statistics show about how often it kills, health specialists agree the new coronavirus appears deadlier than the typical flu. Yet the survey suggests a vaccine would be no more popular than the yearly flu shot.

Worldwide, about a dozen COVID-19 vaccine candidates are in early stages of testing or poised to begin. British researchers are opening one of the biggest studies so far, to test an Oxford University-created shot in 10,000 people.

For all the promises of the Trump administration's "Operation Warp Speed," only 20% of Americans expect any vaccine to be available to the public by year's end, the poll found. Most think sometime next year is more likely.

Political divisions seen over how the country reopens the economy are reflected in desire for a vaccine, too. More than half of Democrats call a vaccine necessary for reopening, compared to about a third of Republicans. While 62% of Democrats would get the vaccine, only 43% of Republicans say the same.

"There's still a large amount of uncertainty around taking the vaccine," said Caitlin Oppenheimer, who leads NORC's public health research. "There is a lot of opportunity to communicate with Americans about the value and the safety of a vaccine."

Through kids' eyes: Virus outbreak brings sadness, fear, joy

By MARTHA IRVINE Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — These are children of the pandemic.

In the far-north Canadian town of Iqaluit, one boy has been glued to the news to learn everything he can about the coronavirus. A girl in Australia sees a vibrant future, tinged with sadness for the lives lost. A Rwandan boy is afraid the military will violently crack down on its citizens when his country lifts the lockdown.

There is melancholy and boredom, and a lot of worrying, especially about parents working amid the disease, grandparents suddenly cut off from weekend visits, friends seen only on a video screen.

Some children feel safe and protected. Others are scared. And yet, many also find joy in play, and even silliness.

Associated Press reporters around the world asked kids about living with the virus and to use art to show us what they believe the future might hold. Some sketched or painted, while others sang, danced ballet, built with LEGOs. A few just wanted to talk.

In the remote forests of northern California, one boy, a Karuk Indian, wrote a rap song to express his worries about how his tribe of just 5,000 will survive the pandemic.

Their worries are matched in many places by resilience and hope, for a life beyond the virus.

This is life under lockdown, through the eyes of children.

LILITHA JIPHETHU, 11, SOUTH AFRICA

Lilitha Jiphethu has made a ball out of discarded plastic grocery bags to keep her amused during the lockdown. She and her four siblings play with that makeshift ball almost every day in a small scrub of ground that they've fenced off outside their home.

The 11-year-old screams as her brothers throw the ball at her. Then she laughs, picks up the ball and

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 60 of 66

throws it back at them. This happens again and again.

Lilitha's house is like hundreds of others in this informal settlement of families just outside Johannesburg, South Africa's biggest city. It's made of sheets of scrap metal nailed to wooden beams.

Like many children under lockdown, she misses her friends and her teachers and especially misses playing her favorite game, netball. But she understands why school is closed and why they are being kept at home.

"I feel bad because I don't know if my family (can catch) this coronavirus," Lilitha says. "I don't like it, this corona."

She prefers singing to drawing and chooses to sing a church song in her first language, Xhosa, as her way of describing the future after the pandemic. She misses her choir but takes comfort in the song's lyrics.

She smiles as she begins. Her sweet voice drifts through the one-room home.

"I have a friend in Jesus," she sings. "He is loving and he's not like any other friend.

"He is not deceitful. He is not ashamed of us.

"He is truthful, and he is love."

—Bram Janssen and Gerald Imray

HUDSON DRUTCHAS, 12, UNITED STATES

Hudson Drutchas waited and worried as his mom and sister recovered from coronavirus, quarantined in their rooms. Just a few weeks earlier, he was a busy sixth-grader at Lasalle II, a public elementary school in Chicago. Then the governor issued a stay-at-home order.

Now, the soft-spoken 12-year-old receives school assignments by computer and looks to dog Ty and cat Teddy for comfort.

"Since I don't get to see my friends a lot, they're kind of my closest friends," he says. He giggles when Teddy, now 9, snarls. "He sometimes gets really grumpy because he's an old man. But we still love him a lot."

When not doing schoolwork, Hudson jumps and flips on his trampoline and lifts himself around a door-frame outfitted so he can practice climbing, something he usually does competitively.

He knows he's fortunate, with a good home and family to keep him safe, but it's difficult to be patient. "It makes me feel sad that I am missing out on a part of my childhood," he says.

When he draws his version of the future, Hudson makes a detailed pencil sketch showing life before the coronavirus and after.

The world before looks stark and full of pollution in the drawing. In the future, the city is lush with clear skies and more wildlife and trees.

"I think the environment might kind of, like, replenish itself or maybe grow back," Hudson says.

Still, he feels uncertain: "I'm worried about just how life will be after this. Like, will life change that much?"

—Martha Irvine

ALEXANDRA KUSTOVA, 12, RUSSIA

Hard times can have a silver lining. Alexandra Kustova has come to understand this during this pandemic.

Now that all her studies are conducted online, she has more time for her two favorite hobbies -- ballet and jigsaw puzzles. The 12-year-old also able to spend more time with her family and help her grandmother, who lives in the same building, two floors down at their apartment in Yekaterinburg, a city in the Urals, a mountain range that partly divides Europe and Asia.

Together, they take time to water tomato plants and enjoy one another's company. Time has slowed down.

"Before that I would have breakfast with them, rush out to school, come back, have dinner, go to ballet classes, come back -- and it would already be time to go to bed," Alexandra says.

Ballet has been her passion since she was 8. Now she does classes at home and sends videos of her drills to the trainer, who gives her feedback.

The dance she shows for an AP reporter begins slowly and finishes with leaps in the air.

Just like the pandemic, Alexandra says, it is "sad in the beginning and then it becomes joyful."

"I believe the end is joyful because we must keep on living, keep on growing," she says.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 61 of 66

—Yulia Alekseeva

TRESOR NDIZIHIWE, 12, RWANDA

No school. No playing with friends. Soldiers everywhere. That's life during the coronavirus pandemic for Tresor Ndizihwe, a 12-year-old boy who lives in Rwanda, one of seven brothers and sisters.

Their mother, Jacqueline Mukantwari is paid \$50 a month as a schoolteacher, but she used to earn extra money giving private lessons. That business has dried up, and the family gets food parcels from the government twice a month.

The only regular outside time Tresor has is in a small courtyard next to his home.

"The day becomes long," he says in his native tongue, Kinyarwanda. "(You) can't go out there" — he indicates the world outside his house — "and it makes me feel really uncomfortable."

Tresor draws a picture of the future that shows soldiers shooting civilians who are protesting, he says. He adds dabs of red paint next to one of those who has fallen.

"There is blood," he says, "and some are crying, as you can see."

It's a stark image for a boy to produce. Rwanda was the first country in Africa to enforce a total lockdown because of the virus. It's also a place where the security forces meant to be helping keep people safe have been accused of serious abuses of power.

Yet he wants to be a soldier.

Jacqueline says her son is a good student — "so intelligent." She struggles to reconcile his own desire to join the military with the picture he has drawn.

—Daniel Sabiiti and Gerald Imray

JEIMMER ALEJANDRO RIVEROS, 9, COLOMBIA

Life in Colombia's countryside has become even more difficult for the family of Jeimmer Alejandro Riveros.

The price of herbs and vegetables his single mom and siblings cultivate on a farm in Chipaque have declined. A spotty internet connection makes virtual classes difficult, and a nationwide quarantine means less time outdoors.

"Here is a mountain with a river," Jeimmer, 9, says, pointing at each item in his drawing. In his mind, the future doesn't look so different. "Here I am. Here's my mommy. Here is my brother. Here is my house. Here is the sun and here is the sky."

The family recently launched a YouTube channel with videos showing how to grow and propagate plants that now has more than 420,000 followers. Their first video, introducing the Jeimmer's mom, older brother and dog, has garnered, by now, more than 1 million views.

"Let's make this go viral!" Jeimmer says, as birds chirp in the background.

Colombia is one of Latin America's most unequal countries, and poverty abounds in rural areas where many still lack basic utilities like safe drinking water. Jeimmer's family often walks 40 minutes a day to get fresh milk.

Capital city Bogota — about an hour from the family's farm — has the highest number of coronavirus cases in Colombia. But cases are increasingly being identified in rural areas with few hospitals. Chipaque reported its first case earlier this month.

Despite the obstacles, Jeimmer maintains an upbeat outlook on life under quarantine. He feels safe from the virus with his mom and brother. And he imagines a future with more time spent outdoors and one day, a grown-up job.

"It doesn't matter that we're in lockdown," he says. "We can be happy."

—Christine Armario

ISHIKIIHARA E-KOR, 11, UNITED STATES

Ishikiihara E-kor misses all the normal kid things during the pandemic: playing baseball, hanging out with friends and having a real party for his 11th birthday, which he instead celebrated with relatives on

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 62 of 66

a Zoom call. The internet periodically goes out for hours, making it hard for him to complete his school work, so he plays with his dog, Navi Noop Noop.

But Shikii, as his friends call him, also has bigger things on his mind. He's a Karuk Indian, a member of California's second-largest tribe, and has been reading about how the pandemic is rampaging through the Navajo Nation, another tribe hundreds of miles away.

The virus can feel far away in the tribe's tiny outpost of Orleans, California, where the crystal clear lower Klamath River winds through densely forested mountains south of the Oregon-California border. But in a rap Shikii wrote, he urged fellow tribal members not to get complacent.

"Stay away, man, 6 feet at least. Social distancing, it's a thing that could save us. What? Like 5,000 of us left, Karuk tribe, man, that's it."

Ishikiihara, whose full name means "sturgeon warrior" in the Karuk language, later adds, "If we even just lost a few people, that would be really sad."

Rapping about his worries isn't new for him. He has a song about how his tribe lost its tradition fishing salmon runs on the Klamath River, pondering in verse why the Karuk "needed permission to go fishin'."

—Gillian Flaccus

—
BANEEN AHMED, 10, JORDAN

Despite the harshness she has experienced, the quiet, studious girl is brimming with hard-won optimism. Her family's suffering in war-time Iraq has taught Baneen Ahmed that outside events can turn life upside down in an instant. In the chaotic aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, an uncle was kidnapped, and a great-uncle was killed by armed militias, forcing her family to seek refuge in Jordan.

By comparison, the coronavirus pandemic seems manageable, the 10-year-old says. Scientists will find a vaccine, she says, speaking in halting but vocabulary-rich English, her favorite subject of study at a private school in the Jordanian capital of Amman.

"It's going to take a year or a little bit to find a cure, so it's going to end," says Baneen, who prefers to talk and show how she's studying at home under lockdown, rather than drawing a picture.

"In Iraq, it's not going to end," she continues. "It's like so hard to end it, the killing and the kidnapping."

In the future, she sees herself studying abroad, maybe in the United States or Turkey. She's thought about a career in medicine, but is excited by any opportunity to learn. For her, school represents hope.

"I want to go somewhere else because they will let us study good things," Baneen says. "And my future is going to be good."

—Karin Laub

—
ELENA MORETTI, 11, ITALY

For Elena Moretti, the pandemic is not some faraway threat. Italy was the first European country to be hit by COVID-19, and her mother is a doctor in the public health system that has seen 27,500 personnel infected and more than 160 doctors dead nationwide.

Elena, 11, is afraid of the coronavirus. Whenever a package arrives in the mail, she brings it out onto the terrace and disinfects it with a spray-bottle soap solution she made herself.

It's a bottle, too, in Elena's drawing, capturing the virus inside.

"The virus wanted to attack us, so instead of bringing us down, we counterattack and imprison it," she said of her drawing.

That fighting spirit has helped Elena get through more than two months of lockdown. After an initial spell of sleeping late because her teachers hadn't transitioned to remote learning, Elena now does schoolwork, karate and hip-hop lessons online.

Sometimes the internet connection goes out. But she's still managed to keep in touch with friends, with some video chats lasting for hours. She's also discovered a new hobby, baking sweets — apple tort, cupcakes and cream-filled pastry.

Now that Italy's lockdown has begun to ease, Elena is starting to go out again, but the fear remains.

"I'm afraid it might spread even more and take all of us," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 63 of 66

—Paolo Santalucia

NIKI JOLENE BERGHAMRE-DAVIS, 11, AUSTRALIA

When she doesn't move enough, she doesn't sleep well. So, Niki Jolene Berghamre-Davis tries to go hiking in the forest whenever possible during this global pandemic. Even in the best of times, that's where the 11-year-old from Port Melbourne, Australia, feels most at home.

"She is our nature girl," says her mother, Anna Berghamre.

Her mom wasn't surprised when Niki Jolene drew a self-portrait of herself facing a grove of trees. Within the drawing, there are signs of caution.

"I have a face mask in my hand," she says holding up the drawing, "because, well, I've just kind of taken it off, and I'm still aware."

She says that falling leaves she included in the sketch symbolize the lives that have been lost in this pandemic.

Yet the roots of the trees — wide and prominent like those of the flowering red gum trees near her family's townhome — represent "possibilities," says the bubbly girl, known as "Snickers" to some of her friends. She smiles often, showing a full set of braces on her teeth.

"After this corona pandemic, after this will end, I think it will be much more full of life," she says, throwing her arms up for emphasis. She hopes, for instance, that people will walk more and drive less because she's noticed how people in her neighborhood have often done without their cars during the shutdown.

"I think people won't take things for granted anymore."

—Martha Irvine

DANYLO BOICHUK, 12, UKRAINE

Danylo Boichuk envies his cat, Kari, who is able to escape from the family home in a Kyiv suburb and run free. Because of the pandemic, his family had to cancel a summer camp in Bulgaria, and 12-year-old Danylo worries a lot about closed borders.

Sitting on his back porch, he has used his LEGO blocks and figures to create his version of the future — a situation at the border.

"Here is a vessel en route to Copenhagen, and border guards are inspecting it," Danylo explains, pointing to particular pieces and holding up others. "This crew member shows medical evidence that everyone on board is healthy, except for one man in an isolation cell."

The plastic figure makes a rattling sound after he drops it into the makeshift jail.

"There is a security guard restricting contact with the man," he continues. "There are IT specialists at work. There are also people who lost their jobs — musicians, farmers, showmen."

The boy wonders if authorities in some countries will use the coronavirus crisis to tighten their grip on people's lives. "For example, they may implant chips to track (people's) whereabouts ...," Danylo surmises.

His parents say he has an analytical mind. Already, he wants to become a businessman in the future and create a start-up to develop online games. He's been reading books about Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, and other famous entrepreneurs, during self-isolation.

After the pandemic, he says people will invest more in internet products and games.

"This is an opportunity one should use," he says.

—Dmitry Vlasov

ANA LAURA RAMÍREZ LAVANDERO, 10, CUBA

Her drawing depicts a simple enough dream for a 10-year-old — "Viaje a la Playa," a trip to the beach. On the page, she has colored a palm tree with three brown coconuts, a boat floating in the distance and a shining yellow sun.

It is a scene representative of life on her island country, known for its white sand and aqua-blue waters. For now, however, Ana Laura Ramírez Lavandero can only dream of the beach. Under lockdown, she finds herself confined to the fourth-floor apartment she shares with her parents and grandmother. On the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 64 of 66

balcony, she watches life through a rusted iron trellis. It can seem like a jail.

"My life changed," says the girl, who's accustomed to playing on the streets of her working and middle-income neighborhood in Havana.

The only time she's been able to go out in nearly two months has been for an emergency trip to the dentist. Schools are closed, and because many people in Cuba don't have internet, the education ministry is broadcasting lessons on state television.

Ana Laura dreams of becoming a famous drummer. This was her first year at a highly selective institute for students identified early on as musically talented. She is continuing with classes in math, history and Spanish, but not music.

Her children's chorus also can't meet right now. Usually, her own choir meets alongside another one, with boys and girls of all ages.

"People feel united in the chorus," she says wistfully. She can't wait to see them again.

—Andrea Rodríguez

SANWERIA BROTHERS, 8 AND 9, INDIA

Advait Vallabh Sanweria, age 9, grins as his younger brother lists all the things they've been doing during India's extended shutdown.

"We get spanked, scolded, watch movies, cook, sweep floors and use the phone and make Skype calls," Uddhav Pratap Sanweria, age 8, says in Hindi.

At times the brothers are a bit of a comedy routine, or at least a danger to the furniture in their home. They've turned one room into a cricket pitch, with one brother bowling, or pitching, the ball, while the other bats. Other times, they play quieter games, such as chess or Uno.

Excited at first about school shutting down indefinitely, the brothers missed being able to go outside.

"It is frustrating to stay locked inside our homes," Advait Vallabh, the 9-year-old says of the lockdown, which have since eased a little. "When I get frustrated, sometimes I read a book. Sometimes I cry."

Recently, the brothers were excited to see a rainbow arching across blue skies outside their home.

"The weather has changed so much," says Advait Vallabh, noting the visibly fresh air in New Delhi, as pollution in the otherwise choked city has cleared drastically during the lockdown.

Even with the ups and downs, the brothers believe the lockdown should continue for a year.

"They shouldn't reopen until the time there are zero cases left," the younger Uddhav Pratap says.

—Rishi Lekhi and Rishabh Raj Jain

OWEN WATSON, 12, CANADA

Dressed in a puffy parka made by his mom and with cellphone in hand, Owen Watson gives a tour of his town, Iqaluit, in the far-north Canadian territory of Nunavut. There's still snow on the ground in May, though the days are getting longer in this place known for its spectacular views of the northern lights.

"That light blue place is the school that I used to go to," 12-year-old Owen says of the shuttered structure behind him. Then he turns to a playground. "It's not supposed to be played with right now."

Surrounded by rivers, lakes and the ocean, filled with Arctic char, his dad, Aaron Watson, says the name of their town means "fishes" in Inuktitut, the language spoken by this region's Inuit people, which includes Owen and his mom and sister. Dad is originally from Stratford, Ontario, and works in the tourism industry in Nunavut.

Under nationwide shutdown, Owen has kept busy with packets of work from his teachers. He rides his bike around the even-quieter-than-usual town – and tries not to worry too much.

His dad observes how much Owen has been watching news about the coronavirus and wonders if they're raising a future scientist.

So far, there have been no documented cases of the coronavirus in the town of about 8,000 people, many of whom work for the federal government and the city. When flights are running, they can fly to the Canadian capital, Ottawa, in three hours.

So young Owen thinks it's only a matter of time before the virus arrives. "If it gets here," he says, "I'll

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 65 of 66

be more afraid.”

He waits and watches. The sun sets to the west, as clouds reflect soft shades of pink and purple. It's a lot for a boy to think about.

—Martha Irvine

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, May 28, the 149th day of 2020. There are 217 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 28, 1912, the Senate Commerce Committee issued its report on the Titanic disaster that cited a "state of absolute unpreparedness," improperly tested safety equipment and an "indifference to danger" as some of the causes of an "unnecessary tragedy."

On this date:

In 1533, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, declared the marriage of England's King Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn valid.

In 1863, the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, made up of freed blacks, left Boston to fight for the Union in the Civil War.

In 1908, British author Ian Fleming, the creator of James Bond as well as "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," was born in London.

In 1918, American troops fought their first major battle during World War I as they launched an offensive against the German-held French village of Cantigny (kahn-tee-NYEE'); the Americans succeeded in capturing the village.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt pushed a button in Washington signaling that vehicular traffic could begin crossing the just-opened Golden Gate Bridge in California. Neville Chamberlain became prime minister of Britain. In Nazi Germany, Volkswagen was founded by the German Labour Front.

In 1940, during World War II, the Belgian army surrendered to invading German forces.

In 1957, National League owners gave permission for the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants to move to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

In 1959, the U.S. Army launched Able, a rhesus monkey, and Baker, a squirrel monkey, aboard a Jupiter missile for a suborbital flight which both primates survived.

In 1964, the charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization was issued at the start of a meeting of the Palestine National Congress in Jerusalem.

In 1977, 165 people were killed when fire raced through the Beverly Hills Supper Club in Southgate, Kentucky.

In 1987, to the embarrassment of Soviet officials, Mathias Rust (mah-TEE'-uhs rust), a young West German pilot, landed a private plane in Moscow's Red Square without authorization. (Rust was freed by the Soviets the following year.)

In 2003, President George W. Bush signed a 10-year, \$350 billion package of tax cuts, saying they already were "adding fuel to an economic recovery."

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama visited Grand Isle, Louisiana, where he personally confronted the spreading damage wrought by the crude gushing into the Gulf of Mexico from the BP blowout — and the bitter anger rising onshore. Suspected Islamist militants attacked two mosques packed with hundreds of worshippers from a minority sect in eastern Pakistan; at least 93 people were killed and dozens wounded. Gary Coleman, the former child star of the 1970s TV sitcom "Diff'rent Strokes," died at Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in Provo two days after suffering a brain hemorrhage; he was 42.

Five years ago: A federal grand jury indictment handed up in Chicago revealed that former U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert had agreed to pay \$3.5 million in hush money to keep an unidentified person silent about "prior misconduct" by the Illinois Republican. (Hastert later pleaded guilty to breaking banking law and was sentenced to 15 months in prison; prosecutors said the money was intended to conceal

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 320 ~ 66 of 66

past sexual abuse against a student wrestler while Hastert was a high school teacher and coach.) For the second straight year, the Scripps National Spelling Bee ended with co-champions as Vanya Shivashankar and Gokul Venkatachalam (GO'-kul VEHN'-kuh-TAHTCH'-uh-lum) were the last two standing.

One year ago: Sports Illustrated magazine was sold for \$110 million to Authentic Brands Group, a company that specializes in managing fashion, entertainment and sports brands. A vicious storm tore through the western outskirts of Kansas City, spawning one or more tornadoes that injured at least 12 people. Novelist MacKenzie Bezos, who had finalized her divorce from Amazon founder Jeff Bezos earlier in the year, pledged to give away half her fortune to charity.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Carroll Baker is 89. Producer-director Irwin Winkler is 89. Basketball Hall of Famer Jerry West is 82. Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani is 76. Singer Gladys Knight is 76. Singer Billy Vera is 76. Singer John Fogerty (Creedance Clearwater Revival) is 75. Country musician Jerry Douglas is 64. Actor Louis Mustillo is 62. Former governor and U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., is 60. Actor Brandon Cruz (TV: "The Courtship of Eddie's Father") is 58. Country singer Phil Vassar is 56. Actress Christa Miller is 56. Singer-musician Chris Ballew (Presidents of the USA) is 55. Rapper Chubb Rock is 52. Singer Kylie Minogue (KY'-lee mihn-OHG') is 52. Actor Justin Kirk is 51. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., is 49. Olympic gold medal figure skater Ekaterina Gordeeva is 49. Television personality Elisabeth Hasselbeck is 43. R&B singer Jaheim is 43. Actor Jake Johnson is 42. Actor Jesse Bradford is 41. Actress Monica Keena is 41. Actress Alexa Davalos is 38. Actress Megalyn Echikunwoke (eh-cheek-uh-WALK'-ay) is 38. Pop singer Colbie Caillat (kal-LAY') is 35. Actress Carey Mulligan is 35. Actor Joseph Cross is 34. Chicago Cubs pitcher Craig Kimbrel is 32.

Thought for Today: "The bravest thing you can do when you are not brave is to profess courage and act accordingly." — Corra May Harris, American writer (1869-1935).

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